

2011

## EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM IN PREPARING THEM FOR DIVERSE URBAN CLASSROOMS

Taranjit Saini

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses>

---

### Recommended Citation

Saini, Taranjit, "EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM IN PREPARING THEM FOR DIVERSE URBAN CLASSROOMS" (2011). *Digitized Theses*. 3367.  
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses/3367>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Digitized Special Collections at Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digitized Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact [wlsadmin@uwo.ca](mailto:wlsadmin@uwo.ca).

EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF A TEACHER  
EDUCATION PROGRAM IN PREPARING THEM FOR DIVERSE URBAN  
CLASSROOMS

(Pre-service Teacher Preparation for Diverse Classrooms)

(Monograph)

by

Taranjit Saini

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

© Taranjit Saini 2011

## CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

### Supervisor

Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti

### Supervisory Committee

Dr. Wayne Martino

### Examiners

Dr. Linda Weber

Dr. Shelley Taylor

Dr. Suzanne Majhanovich

The thesis by

**Taranjit Saini**

entitled:

**Exploring Pre-service Teachers' Experiences of a Teacher Education Program in  
Preparing Them for Diverse Urban Classrooms**

**is accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

## **Abstract**

As classrooms become more diverse, there is an increasing need to prepare teachers to work with a culturally and racially diverse student population. This research investigated pre-service teachers' experiences working with a culturally and racially diverse student population as they progressed through their teacher education program. The focus was on participants who were enrolled in an equity education course and were interested in making a difference in the lives of minority and immigrant students. The purpose of this study was to examine whether pre-service teachers felt that they were prepared to teach in diverse urban classrooms. The research was primarily based on in-depth interviews with three pre-service teachers to gain insight into their experiences. The research drew on anti-racism as a theoretical framework because it addresses institutional and systemic issues that we encounter in the education system.

The findings of the research show that these pre-service teachers became more aware of issues related to teaching racially and culturally diverse students. However, they still struggled with how to close the gap between theory and practice and how to address issues of diversity in their daily practice. The main themes discussed were 1) the characteristics and needs of students in diverse environments, 2) the understanding and practice of equity, 3) the idea and practice of inclusivity and 4) changes in perspective as a result of the equity course and in the context of the teacher education program. The pre-service teachers believed that the equity education course, as part of their teacher education program, expanded on their knowledge about teaching in culturally and racially diverse classrooms and served as a stepping stone for them to critically think about equity

issues.

**Keywords:**

pre-service teacher education, urban education, teaching for diversity, anti-racist education, multiculturalism, teacher preparation

## Dedication

To my family and friends, thank you for your love and support throughout this process.

It is with your love that this book would not have been possible. Thank you for your

encouragement, support, and belief in me throughout this process. My thanks and

appreciation goes out to Dr. Wayne M. Miller, my advisor and a dear friend.

I would also like to acknowledge the many people who helped me to participate in this

research study. Thank you for making the time to help me with my research.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your love and support throughout this

process. Thank you.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti, without whom this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you for your guidance, support and encouragement throughout this process. My thanks and appreciation goes out to Dr. Wayne Martino, my supervisory committee member.

I would also like to acknowledge the pre-service teachers that agreed to participate in this research study. Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences with me.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone that has supported me in any respect during the completion of this thesis.

## Table of Contents

<b>Certificate of Examination.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
 <b>Chapter 1 – Introduction.....</b>	 <b>1</b>
<i>Context.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Main questions.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Theoretical/Conceptual framework.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Summary.....</i>	<i>10</i>
 <b>Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....</b>	 <b>12</b>
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Changing demographics.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Challenges of working in diverse schools and the     role of pre-service programs.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Perceptions of urban schools.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Opportunities for reflection.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Summary.....</i>	<i>32</i>
 <b>Chapter 3 – Methodology.....</b>	 <b>34</b>
<i>Overview.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Data collection.....</i>	<i>36</i>



<i>Data analysis</i> .....	41
<i>Limitations</i> .....	42
<i>Summary</i> .....	43
<b>Chapter 4 - Research Findings</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<i>Introduction</i> .....	44
<i>Participants</i> .....	44
<i>The characteristics and needs of students in diverse environments</i> .....	46
<i>The understanding and practice of equity</i> .....	57
<i>The idea and practice of inclusivity</i> .....	71
<i>Changes in perspective as a result of the equity issues course and in the context of the teacher education program</i> .....	77
<i>Summary</i> .....	79
<b>Chapter 5 – Conclusions</b> .....	<b>84</b>
<i>Overview</i> .....	84
<i>Limitations</i> .....	88
<i>Implications</i> .....	89
<i>Areas for future research</i> .....	89
<i>A final note</i> .....	90

<b>Works cited.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b><i>A – Letter of information.....</i></b>	<b>95</b>
<b><i>B – Consent form.....</i></b>	<b>96</b>
<b><i>C – Guiding interview questions.....</i></b>	<b>97</b>
<b><i>D – Thesis proposal approval.....</i></b>	<b>98</b>
<b><i>E – Curriculum vitae.....</i></b>	<b>99</b>

in learning and that their knowledge and skills are not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of the community. This highlights the importance of providing a learning environment that is not only challenging but also supportive. The importance of providing a learning environment that is not only challenging but also supportive is highlighted by the fact that the majority of students who are enrolled in the program are from low-income backgrounds. This highlights the importance of providing a learning environment that is not only challenging but also supportive. The importance of providing a learning environment that is not only challenging but also supportive is highlighted by the fact that the majority of students who are enrolled in the program are from low-income backgrounds.

The focus for this study is to explore the experiences of students who are enrolled in the program and to identify the factors that influence their learning and achievement. The study will focus on the experiences of students who are enrolled in the program and to identify the factors that influence their learning and achievement. The study will focus on the experiences of students who are enrolled in the program and to identify the factors that influence their learning and achievement. The study will focus on the experiences of students who are enrolled in the program and to identify the factors that influence their learning and achievement.

and it is a well-known fact that the majority of students who are enrolled in the program are from low-income backgrounds. This highlights the importance of providing a learning environment that is not only challenging but also supportive. The importance of providing a learning environment that is not only challenging but also supportive is highlighted by the fact that the majority of students who are enrolled in the program are from low-income backgrounds.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### *Context*

The increasing level of diversity in classrooms across Ontario highlights the importance of urban education and the need for research into this area of education. Students in urban schools face unique challenges and have various backgrounds that affect their educational experience. These students in urban schools are shown to achieve at lower rates than their middle class peers. In a system that prides itself on equal opportunity for all students, it is essential to examine the unique needs of students in urban schools. Research shows that there are more new teachers that work in urban schools, because schools in urban communities face challenges around teacher retention (Frankenberg, Taylor & Merseeth, 2010). This highlights the importance of pre-service education in preparing new teachers with the skills needed to be successful in urban communities in order to address the issue of teacher retention.

The focus for this study is to explore pre-service teachers' perspectives and their experiences and knowledge in regards to working with a diverse student population in a teacher education program in Ontario. Urban education is a broad and complex concept, which encompasses many different issues. For the purposes of this study, urban classrooms are defined as diverse classrooms; specifically, an urban context is one

that is populated with culturally and racially diverse learners and has a heavy concentration of English language learners, a large number of poorer students—particularly students of color, high attrition of teachers, heavy institutional and systemic barriers, and meager resources.

[Further] urban schools tend to be grossly underfunded, larger in size, and infiltrated with administrative bureaucracy (Milner, p.346, 2006).

In my experience in an urban education course, the various issues that are relevant to an urban context were examined. For the purposes of this study, students taking a course on equity issues in education were interviewed. The specific issue being examined is the experiences of pre-service teachers and their readiness to teach in culturally and racially diverse environments based on their pre-service program. Ladson-Billings (2001) maintained

that teachers in urban classrooms not only [will encounter] . . . multiracial or multiethnic [students] but they [students] are also likely to be diverse along linguistic, religious, ability, and economic lines. . . . Today teachers walk into urban classrooms with children who represent an incredible range of diversity. Not only are [there] students of different races and ethnicities, but there are students whose parents are incarcerated or drug-addicted, whose parents have never held a steady job, whose parents are themselves children (at least chronologically), and who are bounced from one foster home to the next. And there are children who have no homes or parents (Milner, 2006, p.14).

This shows that urban classrooms are complex and the term 'urban' can be used as a broad concept that includes issues of cultural and linguistic diversity, race, ability and socio-economic status. For this study, the focus is on pre-service teachers and their experiences in an equity education course that deals with preparing teacher education candidates to work in culturally and racially diverse classroom environments.

Teachers are entering classrooms that are increasingly diverse along many different lines. There are significant numbers of schools that fall into the category of 'urban' in one way or another. The diverse needs of students in classrooms create a

complex work environment that requires preparedness on the part of educators. In reference to students in urban schools, many stereotypes and biases exist, which must be deconstructed and the cultural gap between students and teachers needs to be addressed. While the teaching population remains relatively the same, student populations are becoming more diverse (Rezai-Rashti, 1995). This equates to a need in pre-service programs to focus on urban education and teaching for diversity in classrooms. Currently, many students in urban schools are disengaged, dropping out and not moving on to pursue post-secondary education (Sleeter, 2001).

My interest in urban education has developed as a result of my experiences as a student and educator. Growing up in an urban community in Toronto, and being from a minority background, there are many obstacles and stereotypes that ultimately impact the educational outcome of students in urban schools. While attending schools in my local community, I had to deal with stereotypes, a lack of resources and lower expectations for achievement based solely on the location of the school.

As a student in a Concurrent Education teaching program, I worked towards completing my Bachelor of Education at the same time as my undergraduate degree. During this three year program, I had practicum placements in diverse neighbourhoods in Toronto and Mississauga. One of my practicum placements was in a school in my local community that has a very culturally and racially diverse student population. Through my conversations with students, I gained an appreciation for their unique circumstances and the challenges they faced on a daily basis. The students echoed my concerns about a lack of resources, old and out-dated textbooks and low expectations for achievement. Within

this environment, I heard many stereotypes and generalizations about the students in this school, which filtered down to the students and impacted their educational experience. This experience clearly demonstrated the need for effective urban education courses for teachers in pre-service programs to help combat stereotypes and place value on the diverse experiences and background of students.

A trend that I found during my teaching experiences was the increasing diversity in classrooms and schools. The diversity in classrooms has led to my belief that there is a need to have various strategies in place to reach all learners. My personal teaching and learning experiences have highlighted the importance of ensuring that students have the necessary supports to maximize their strengths and reach their full potential.

As a student, I had a strong interest in urban education and learning to adapt my teaching to meet the different needs of students. This initial interest prompted me to enrol in an urban education course, which increased my interest in this area and contributed to the development of this research study. In my personal experience, this course was very helpful and informative as it made me more aware of different strategies and pedagogies to consider in teaching and how to integrate a variety of approaches into my own teaching practice. The urban education course ended up being a great resource and showed me how to develop relevant material for students based on their context and experiences.

Research in the area of urban education highlights the importance of preparing teachers to work in diverse classrooms. While there are studies that look at the experiences of teachers in urban education courses, there is little research that utilizes a case study approach to gain an in-depth perspective into the experiences of pre-service

teachers. Looking specifically at the experiences of pre-service teachers is essential because ultimately, teachers are the ones that deliver content to students. Teachers need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to adapt their teaching and ensure students' experiences are reflected in coursework. Focusing on pre-service teachers provides a unique perspective on the issues they face; using a case study approach allows for personal accounts and real stories of the rewards and challenge of teaching a diverse student population.

Overall, this is an important area of study because increased preparedness on the part of teachers can help students in diverse urban schools flourish and be successful in different facets of their life, including their academic achievement. Due to the complexity of diverse classrooms and schools, it is clear that effective teacher education programs are needed to help pre-service teachers acquire the skills and strategies required to be successful in such diverse environments. Teachers who are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge of pedagogy can work towards the goal of success for all students. This coincides with the purpose of the research, which aimed to examine the experiences of pre-service teachers and whether they think that they are learning the skills needed to work in diverse urban classrooms.

There is significant research that shows Canada's multiethnic and multiracial diversity, specifically in urban centres (Dei, 2008). This is particularly important for educators working in urban areas and has many implications. Research shows that there is an increasing cultural gap between teachers and students (Sleeter, 2001). As Young (2007) asserts, while the student population is becoming more diverse, applicants to

programs remain the same in terms of race and ethnicity. Current programs are composed primarily of White teachers that bring limited cross-cultural knowledge, background and experiences (Sleeter, 2001). Groulx (2001) maintains that "coupled with the demographic imbalance between student and teacher populations is a prevalence of low teacher expectations for ethnic minorities and inner-city students" (p.61). This gap between students and teachers adds to the importance of educating pre-service teachers about the racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs of students (Young, 2007). Solomon and Levine-Rasky (2003) highlight that "research has convincingly shown that members of groups identified by racial and ethnic characteristics experience educational inequity in our schools" (p.4). This research further contributes to the significance of anti-racist education in pre-service education programs.

### ***Main questions***

This qualitative study looked at the significance of a pre-service education program in preparing teachers to meet the unique needs of students in diverse urban schools.

Specifically, the experiences of three pre-service teachers were followed closely to explore the changes in their thoughts, beliefs and practices as a result of their pre-service teacher education program. Interviews with these students were analyzed to follow their experiences as they worked through an equity issues course and progressed through their teacher education program.

My research looks to explore and understand the perspectives of the pre-service teachers enrolled in an equity course as part of their pre-service program; the teachers in this study were asked about their experiences in urban schools and some of the rewards



and challenges of working in such diverse environments. A main guiding question in the research was, 1) to what extent does a pre-service education program prepares teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach effectively in culturally and racially diverse environments; as well, 2) whether they thought that their pre-service teacher education program prepared them to teach in diverse classrooms.

Additional questions that guided the study include:

- 1) How did the pre-service teacher education program change teachers' perspectives on teaching in diverse classrooms?
- 2) Why did the pre-service teachers choose to take a course on equity issues in education as part of their pre-service teacher education program? What necessary skills and knowledge were they hoping to gain in their program that would help them be successful in culturally and racially diverse classrooms?
- 3) How did the course on equity issues in education, as part of the pre-service teacher education program, help pre-service teachers to think critically about teaching in racially and culturally diverse environments?

### ***Theoretical/conceptual framework***

The nature of these research questions fits into an anti-racist education framework. The literature and research in the area of educating for diversity commonly refers to multicultural and anti-racist education. As Solomon and Levine-Rasky (2003) define, multicultural education (MCE) focuses on uniqueness of cultures but it can emphasize stereotypical notions of culture; anti-racist education (ARE) is more proactive and deals with systemic discrimination. However, "generally speaking, multicultural

education (MCE) is regarded as a positive and preventative approach to equity education, while anti-racist education [ARE] is regarded as a negative or reactive approach to "undesirable situations" (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003, pg.43). Dei (2008) clarifies this and defines anti-racist education as "proactive educational practice intended to address all forms of racism and the intersection of social difference (race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability)" (p.1). Further, he highlights that educators need to look through the lens of race in understanding their students and their experiences (Dei, 2008).

Anti-racist educators in Canada assert that "anti-racist education emerged from the struggles of racial minorities against imperial, colonial, and neocolonial experiences" (Rezai-Rashti, 1995, p.6). When discussing multicultural and anti-racist education, Rezai-Rashti (1995) states that while "the central assumption of multicultural education is that sensitization and celebration of difference can counteract biased and prejudiced attitudes among Canadians, anti-racist education concentrates on examining the histories and the practices that prejudice supports" (p.6). A key difference is that anti-racist education looks at power relations and the inequities that result from differences in power (Rezai-Rashti, 1995). This explanation demonstrates the drastic difference between multicultural and anti-racist education. As well, anti-racist education looks at the way that racism originates, while in multicultural education, racism is viewed as a result of ignorance (Rezai-Rashti, 1995). Specifically examining the educational achievement of minority students', multicultural education holds that the lack of achievement is due primarily to home and cultural factors, and not a result of the education system (Rezai-Rashti, 1995). On the other hand, while anti-racist education recognizes the role of social, home and

economic factors, the primary reason for this lack of academic success is institutionalized racism that exists in the classroom (Rezai-Rashti, 1995).

Anti-racist education is an appropriate framework for this study because it addresses the complex intersections of difference and does not focus solely on unique aspects of various cultures. Johnston, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews and Kim (2009) expand on the concept of multicultural education by discussing critical multiculturalism, which includes the anti-racist perspective on education. Critical multiculturalism “involves deconstructing traditional knowledge and power boundaries and constructing knowledge that includes, rather than excludes, diverse world views” (Johnston, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews & Kim, 2009, 2009, p.6). For the purposes of this study, the terms anti-racist education and critical multiculturalism are defined similarly.

In a study of pre-service teachers, Goodwin (1997) found that teachers took a reactive approach rather than a proactive one when it came to multiculturalism. They would deal with issues around multiculturalism as they came up and did not engage in broad conversations about such topics in their teaching (Goodwin, 1997). This demonstrates the importance of tackling complex issues in pre-service education to prepare teachers to address challenging issues in diverse school environments. Discussing their study, Solomon and Rezai-Rashti (2000) conclude “from the findings of the study it became apparent that candidates’ lack of theoretical grounding in antiracism pedagogy led to the implementation of the less critical, celebratory and harmonious multiculturalism” (pg.71). This study supported the idea that there is currently a superficial understanding of antiracism pedagogy and it can work to perpetuate

stereotypes. Galma, Pica-Smith and Rosenberg (2010) highlighted the importance of utilizing an anti-racist framework and concluded that pre-service teachers' use and understanding of anti-racist frameworks will influence their practice, opportunities for students and their interaction with students, their families and the community as a whole.

The anti-racist approach requires teachers to acknowledge the different lived experiences and backgrounds of their students when teaching and developing coursework. Pre-service teachers need to be equipped with the skills to address racism and social difference in a critical manner. Dei (2008) importantly highlights that teachers need to be aware of the dangers of acknowledging difference and not responding to it or addressing inequities. This allows the practice to continue unchallenged but it is equally important for teachers to recognize that not all oppression is the same as there are different consequences for different types of oppression (Dei, 2008). This is key because if educators begin to treat all oppression as equal, it continues to perpetuate stereotypes through promoting essentialism and oppressive norms.

### ***Summary***

The first chapter presented an introduction to the research topic and the purpose of my research. The main questions that guide the research were also outlined as well as the theoretical/conceptual framework and important definitions. Chapter 2 focuses on the current literature in the area of urban education and teaching in diverse environments, with special attention given to literature related to pre-service teachers. In Chapter 3, the methodology utilized in the study is described as well as why it was the best methodology for the research questions. The data analysis process is also outlined and

discussed in detail, describing the steps taken in this research study. Chapter 4 reports an analysis of the main themes that emerged from the data analysis and Chapter 5 states the main conclusions of the study, the implications of the research and recommendations for further study.

This chapter focuses on representing a picture of the literature relevant to the conceptualisation of the study. The chapter starts with discussing the importance of the proper understanding of the influence of social structures, such as changing demography and the cultural and the racial differences on teachers and their students. Second, this chapter also identifies the changes that education has made when working in different cultural contexts and the need for a new paradigm to emerge and the new model of teacher education. Third, this chapter also looks at the importance of teacher education and the role of the teacher education in relation to their identity and pedagogy in order to develop their skills and to facilitate their role in the classroom.

Furthermore, this literature in the area of teacher education is also discussed. In addition, it is clear that despite the fact that teacher education is a key to achieving necessary knowledge to become a teacher in our schools. The key question of the literature includes how to give voice to the more vulnerable students, how to create environments and those that are socially different based on their race and ethnicity, social class and poverty, language and language of learning (Kotlyar, 2007). In addition, it is important to discuss the literature that studies the current practices in order to help to understand the importance of teacher education work by understanding the importance of Kotlyar (2007) and Kohnen (2008) and to the conclusion that we need to be developed to help teachers practice skills necessary to the effective teacher.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter focuses on presenting a review of the literature related to the research questions of this study. The chapter starts with discussing the increasing need to prepare teachers to work in diverse environments, due to changing demographics and the cultural gap that exists between teachers and their students. Second, this chapter will identify challenges that educators may face when working in diverse urban schools and the role of pre-service programs in preparing teachers for diverse urban schools. Lastly, this chapter will look at the importance of ensuring that pre-service teachers are given opportunities to reflect on their ideas and pedagogy in order to develop their ideas and be effective teachers in the future.

Examining the literature in the area of pre-service teacher preparation for urban schools, it is clear that there is a need for effective courses to equip teachers with necessary knowledge to be successful in urban schools. The key questions to be addressed include how to give voice to the most vulnerable in urban, inner-city environments, those that are socially different based on their race and ethnicity, social class and poverty, immigrant and language status (Soloman & Sekayi, 2007). In addition, there is a need to challenge ideology that sustains the current practices in urban schools and examine how to engage in transformational work in urban settings (Solomon & Sekayi, 2007). In his research, Milner (2006) came to the clear conclusion that courses need to be developed to help teachers gain the skills necessary to be effective urban

teachers. Due to the complexity of the school environment, pre-service programs are the first step to preparing teachers for a variety of issues that they will likely face in their beginning years of teaching. Teacher preparation courses, "if carefully designed and implemented, can have the largest impact on pre-service teachers' perceptions of urban schools" (Hampton, Peng & Ann, 2008, p.291)

### ***Changing demographics***

As shown in research conducted in Canada and the United States, most teacher candidates are white, Anglo-Saxon, lower or middle- class females who have grown up in a suburban or rural area; they tend to speak only English, and hope to teach average, middle-class students in a community very similar to the one in which they grew up (James-Wilson, 1999). Research by Baldwin, Buchanan and Rudisill (2007) found that teacher candidates often assume that their educational and life experiences are very similar to their students, which may result in content and strategies that are not relevant to the students.

A review by Sleeter (2001) found that most White pre-service teachers think that they will be working with children of another cultural background. However, they have minimal cross-cultural knowledge and can also hold stereotypical beliefs about urban children (Desrochers, 2006). This cultural gap has many implications, as "the call for teacher education programs to address the challenge of preparing a predominantly white, middle-class, female teaching force to work effectively with an increasingly diverse population of students is resounding" (Galma, Pica-Smith & Rosenberg, 2010, p.225). The demographic and cultural mismatch between teachers and students is a challenge for

teacher education programs as they try to prepare teachers to work in urban schools (Hagiwara & Wray, 2009). Due to changing demographics and increased diversity in schools, it is more important than ever to prepare urban teachers that are committed to the success of students and urban schools (Frankenberg, Taylor & Merseeth, 2010). Baldwin, Buchanan and Rudisill (2007) add that "shifting demographics in schools toward greater ethnic and linguistic diversity require teacher education programs to teach future teachers how to be effective with all learners" (p.315). This contributes to the importance of urban education courses because as "an overwhelmingly White teaching force continues to teach an increasing minority student population, teacher education institutions must equip all teachers with the tools, skills, and dispositions....necessary to teach all children effectively" (Hagiwara & Wray, 2009, p.340).

Previous research on preparing teachers for urban schools indicates that it is essential for teachers to understand the socio-cultural context of teaching and the socio-economic characteristics of local communities; this is even more important if their background is different from that of the children in the school (James-Wilson, 1999). Teacher preparation programs "are challenged with building bridges across a critical gap in the understanding of diverse socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds and the inequities existing for people different from the mainstream culture" (Baldwin, Buchanan & Rudisill, 2007, p.316). Urban education courses are crucial because these courses provide new teachers with knowledge about the communities that they may be working in and the various ways that context and socio-economic status impacts schooling and achievement.



Leland and Harste (2005) found that there may be inconsistency between what pre-service teachers think and practice; while some new teachers claim not to be prejudiced, they often do not want to discuss poverty or racism. Generally, while teacher candidates' support the ideas of equity and fairness in theory, research has shown that they are unsure of when and how to accommodate (Johnston, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews & Kim, 2009). As Dei (2005) emphasizes, the key is making the step from acknowledgement of these ideas to effective practice and action. These findings show the importance of effective urban education programs to prepare pre-service teachers to work in diverse environments and build on ideas of equity and fairness in education. However, Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004) found that teacher candidates generally felt unprepared after completing their programs to work in diverse environments. This shows that the programs that were examined were not completely successful in helping teachers to adapt to the diversity of urban environments. This is an important conclusion because it shows that traditional approaches to pre-service education need to be expanded and "progressive approaches to schooling in general must be adapted to be effective in urban context(s)" (Soloman & Sekayi, 2007, p.3). There are many implications of current research in the area of urban education and the need to improve training for teachers that are entering increasingly diverse classrooms.

### ***Challenges of working in diverse schools and the role of pre-service programs***

Solomon and Sekayi (2007) assert that "historically, urban, inner-city schools with economically poor and racialized minority students have been framed by a deficit-driven, ideological perspective by those who have the power and responsibility to

determine the schooling process" (p.207). Urban schools face challenges around teacher preparation, recruitment and retention; they are often referred to as "revolving doors" for new teachers (Frankenberg, Taylor & Merseeth, 2010). This also shows that there are issues around teacher commitment, which is a vital factor to the success of students and the school (Frankenberg, Taylor & Merseeth, 2010). In terms of staff, generally there is an overload of responsibilities that stretch school personnel too thin (Solomon & Sekayi, 2007). Further, there is an inadequate number of professional staff for the demands of the environment, high turnover of teachers, a lack of mentoring and professional development for teachers and disengagement from urban communities (Solomon & Sekayi, 2007). Frankenberg, Taylor and Merseeth (2010) concur as they note that some other challenges that teachers in urban schools face are poor working conditions, lack of mentoring, poor leadership and unsuitable teaching assignments. These issues, particularly high turnover, indicate that teachers entering urban environments are not prepared to effectively work with diverse groups of students and meet their needs. It has been shown in previous research that teachers in urban classrooms have to work with a wide range of students that are diverse along many different lines (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Again, this reflects back onto pre-service teacher programs and highlights the vital role these programs play in preparing teachers for diverse classrooms. There is a need to recruit and retain teachers that are committed to working in urban schools (Frankenberg, Taylor & Merseeth, 2010). Commitment on the part of teachers results in higher success of students and fewer problems with retention; is it essential to develop a commitment to teaching in urban schools in new teachers, which will ultimately help overcome the

obstacle of retention (Frankenberg, Taylor & Merseth, 2010). A study by Frankenberg, Taylor and Merseth (2010) found that generally, teachers that were more committed to teaching urban students during their program were more likely to work in urban schools that were diverse among racial and economic lines after graduation. Further, they were also more likely to continue working in urban schools for the first few years of their profession (Frankenberg, Taylor & Merseth, 2010).

It is important to recognize that teachers may enter urban education courses with little knowledge about cultures other than their own (Milner, 2006). To be successful, it is critical to foster certain dispositions in pre-service teachers, such as consideration of the impact of cultural forces on human development, flexibility to cope with unpredictable schools and determination to become more aware of one's own biases and prejudices (Groulx, 2001). These characteristics can help set the foundation for teachers to adapt to their work environment, which is often unpredictable and presents many challenges.

A key point found in the literature is the need to teach pre-service teachers that difference does not equal deficit (James-Wilson, 2007). As Hampton, Peng and Ann (2008) found, pre-service teachers need to see diversities not just as problems but as assets. In order to understand the needs of students in inner city schools, teacher candidates must move beyond deficit orientation and develop an understanding of factors, such as recent immigration, that impact students, families, learning and teaching (Rose, 2007). As found in research, there is growing diversity in school populations and the cultural lenses used by teachers may be inconsistent with their students (Dee & Henkin, 2002). Weiner (1999) emphasizes the importance of this point and notes that "because we

are immersed in our own culture, we take it for granted and often forget that we bring to all our social interactions a particular cultural frame of reference that has not been shared by all people at all times" (p.52) Further, "all teachers need to know how to examine their own cultural frame of reference and to understand how social inequality is reflected and reproduced in schooling" (Weiner, 1999, p.19). Hagiwara and Wray (2009) importantly point out that teacher preparation programs need to help teachers assess self-knowledge because this will help prospective teachers view themselves as members of a diverse society and to value other cultures.

A key question in the area of pre-service programs is whether teachers are prepared to work productively in urban environments (Solomon & Sekayi, 2007). This leads to an emphasis on teacher education programs, which Solomon and Sekayi (2007) state have historically been key to perpetuating dominant cultural capital. In order to prepare teachers for the increasing diversity in classrooms, many pre-service programs offer courses on urban education, multicultural education and diversity. Villegas and Lucas (2002) found that teacher education programs are typically adding a course on urban or multicultural education but the rest of the curriculum remains the same.

Goodwin (1997) referenced research that shows that teacher education programs use add-on experiences or single courses to fulfill requirements of multicultural education. This approach is problematic because multicultural curriculum is viewed as an add-on to existing curriculum and another thing to do (Sleeter, 2001). In addition, research shows that stand-alone multicultural education courses may promote stereotypes if issues are discussed superficially (Sleeter, 2001). Due to this, there can often be superficial

treatment of diversity and discussions remain token in nature (Sleeter, 2001). Literature reveals that "adding a few courses in multicultural education is not sufficient to address the growing diversity among students. The point is not to prepare prospective teachers to just value diversity but to ensure that new teachers are prepared to oppose inequity" (Hagiwara & Wray, 2009, p.341).

A main shortcoming discussed by Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004) is that multicultural education courses are offered as electives rather than required core courses. The fact that these courses are not mandatory for all pre-service teachers does not demonstrate a commitment to preparing teachers for the diverse classrooms that exist in schools around the country.

As Solomon and Sekayi (2007) found, it is essential to integrate multicultural education across the curriculum in order to prepare teachers for urban environments. Research findings by Villegas and Lucas (2002) echo these findings and state that the infusion of diversity into all courses and curriculum would be beneficial. Similarly, Groulx (2001) concludes "it is important that multicultural education principles and ideas be introduced and developed across an entire teacher preparation program, not just added as one more component" (p.63). The token inclusion can potentially do more harm than good as pre-service teachers engage in on the surface discussions without delving into the core issues around urban and multicultural education. In their research, Fry and Mckinney (1997) found that coursework under multicultural education in teacher preparation programs often perpetuated stereotypes and did not affect the basic beliefs of candidates. Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004) found that there was also a superficial

discussion of multicultural and anti-racist education within these programs. Teacher candidates tended to ignore systemic power and focus on similarities and not differences; as well, their research showed that multicultural education often pointed out differences and was detrimental to the development of teachers for urban environments (Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004). The research conducted by Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004) found that the way teachers are conceptualizing multiculturalism promotes practices that reproduce power relations. As well, pre-service teachers focused on difference and the process of othering; their views indicate an essentialist perspective on representing different culture, which ignores the complexity and richness of cultures (Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004). As Goodwin (1997) summarizes, "it may be that the fragmented nature of multicultural teacher education programs simply perpetuates the idea of multicultural education as a marginal concern or as a curricular addition that is appended to the regular program" (141). If the add-on approach continues to exist, it will be difficult to move from superficial discussions to meaningful dialogue around issues that students in urban schools face.

Research around pre-service teachers in education programs has consistently found that a colorblind approach is often taken, which is problematic for many reasons. As Young (2007) states, "to speak and act for children and communities of color and not acknowledge the impact of race and racism is to engage in 'cartoonish' discourses about educating other people's children and perpetuate the 'dominant racial ideology'" (p.111). At the pre-service level, there is often resistance to diversity, equity and social justice education due to the fact that it is difficult knowledge, and the belief that teacher

education is about gaining subject-area knowledge and not teaching students how to be part of a socially just and democratic society (Solomon & Sekayi, 2007). As well, there is discomfort around the topic of racism, which is part of the reason that it is not discussed; this is problematic because race is an important aspect of identity and a source of privilege (Dei, 2003). Due to the complex nature of discussions about race, a colorblind approach is often accepted (Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2000). Sleeter (2001) concluded that "White preservice teachers tend to use colorblindness as a way of coping with fear and ignorance" and that they envision a multicultural curriculum "as mainly additions to the existing curriculum" (p. 95).

However, there are many flaws of a colorblind approach to teaching, schooling and education in general (Dei, 2005). Galma, Pica-Smith and Rosenberg (2010) reference previous research that shows that for new teachers, race is very influential in determining academic and behavioural expectations for students of colour. Solomon and Sekayi (2007) found that by teaching the principles and practices of diversity and social justice, there can be long-term changes when teachers go into the classroom. Conversely, in their study, Solomon and Levine-Rasky (2003) found that many teachers communicated a color-blind perspective to teaching and addressing students; this can also be linked to teachers' expectations that students will assimilate. King (1991) coined the term 'dysconscious racism', which is the passive acceptance of dominant white norms and privileges (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003). This concept is revisited by Solomon and Rezai-Rashti (2000) because teachers can reproduce social inequity through passively accepting practices. Groulx (2001) found that

preservice teachers typically appear overconfident about their capabilities in working with children in diverse cultural settings. They rely on naive, idealistic beliefs and have not explored their identities as members of a privileged White race, which leads them to adopt a colorblind perspective, ignoring or denying the fact that ethnic or racial differences can have pedagogical implications (p.61).

An important “component of preparing to be a teacher is interrogating the way status characteristics like race, class, and gender configure every aspect of our lives” (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 5). These findings have many implications for teacher education programs, specifically because pre-service teachers need to develop awareness about their own beliefs in order to overcome and work against stereotypes.

### ***Perceptions of urban schools***

Similar to previous research, pre-service teachers in a study by Hampton, Peng and Ann (2008) stated that their perceptions of urban schools came from media, schooling, friends and family. Media was amongst the most influential, which shows that there is a need to develop an ability to critically analyze media representations of urban schools (Hampton, Peng & Ann, 2008). In the study by Groulx (2001), student teachers relied on stereotypes and media images of working in diverse environments, as they had concerns around safety, lack of parental involvement and unmotivated students. A study by Rose (2007) looked at a program for teacher candidates to learn about teaching in inner city schools; her findings revealed that if teacher candidates do not have knowledge or experiences with inner city youth, they may rely on stories to understand inner city schools, which is highly problematic. As she summarizes,

teachers' folk tales of student fights in the hallway might be



worn like badges of honor. Media productions might construct a danger zone of chaos. Writing might present a deficit perspective where discrepancies in achievement are explained by deficiencies in people and cultures, and not by systems of power (Rose, 2007, p.8).

Similarly, Hagiwara and Wray (2009) found that those that are not familiar with urban contexts often rely on generalizations and deficit assumptions to characterize these areas.

In a review of studies conducted, it was found that pre-service teachers hold stereotypical and naive ideas about urban children, such as believing that these students have attitudes that interfere with their schooling and academic achievement (Sleeter, 2001). Further, for teachers that are not prepared, this can translate into low expectations for students and a readiness to attribute academic and behavioural issues to their home environment (Dee & Henkin, 2002). Similarly, Dei (2003) found that many pre-service teachers view home and families as reasons for problems in schools, instead of looking at what is done (or not done) to support students. Groulx (2001) found that unpreparedness can lead to low teacher expectations among minority and inner city students; they often have their struggles attributed to a lack of motivation or skill. Galma, Pica-Smith and Rosenberg (2010) echo these findings as their research shows that teachers have low expectations for students that belong to racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups that are different from their own.

Teachers may initially frame urban teaching problems in terms of low-achieving students, discipline issues, cultural backgrounds, family factors and lack of parental support (Groulx, 2001). This can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy where students begin to perform down to the expectations set and do not meet their full potential (Groulx,

2001). Groulx (2001) references the conclusions from Haberman and Rickard's (1990) study, which coincide with her research and shows that new teachers may look at problems in urban schools "in terms of low-achieving students, discipline issues, cultural backgrounds, family factors, and lack of parental support" (p.87).

Even before placements in urban schools, teacher candidates can have well-formed ideas about the children they will encounter in urban schools. In a study of teacher candidates from two universities, Baldwin, Buchanan and Rudisill (2007) found that pre-service teachers had many preconceived notions. They "typically held assumptions that underserved communities, rural and urban, were poverty stricken and plagued by crime. In addition, they held a common perception of the children as causing discipline problems, seeming unmotivated, and being difficult to work with" (Baldwin, Buchanan & Rudisill, p.322). The findings of this study showed that many pre-service teachers had stereotypical beliefs that children of colour are difficult, unmotivated and have poor attitudes towards school (Baldwin, Buchanan & Rudisill, 2007).

In a study of a cohort in a consecutive education program in the Greater Toronto Area, half of the teacher candidates surveyed believed that the attitudes and behaviours of students in urban schools would be different from those of students in other schools, despite the fact that they had never had any interaction with 'inner city' youth (James-Wilson, 1999). They concluded that these children would be different in the areas of ability, outlook and parental support; students in urban schools were thought to have short attention spans, impatient, more aggressive and physically violent and in need of more attention than students in suburban areas. As well, teacher candidates concluded

that education was not a priority and parents would not be as available because of financial struggles and working more than one job (James-Wilson, 1999). Following their placements, the teacher candidates discovered that much of what they were initially thinking about the students and schools was based on stories they heard from family, friends, and media and not on any personal experience they had. A similar study found that exposure to urban schools, through placements, can be positive and help shift perceptions of schools (Hampton, Peng & Ann, 2008). This study shows the power of stereotypes, how they are reinforced and can be considered true if the cycle is not broken (James-Wilson, 1999).

It is essential to look at perceptions of urban schools and how these perceptions affect decisions of teachers entering the workforce (Hampton, Peng & Ann, 2008). Pre-service teachers in a study by Hampton, Peng and Ann (2008) describe urban students as lacking motivation, having fewer academic skills, requiring more discipline and have parents that are less supportive. In addition, pre-service teachers communicated a concern for safety – presence of gangs, violence and drugs in urban schools (Hampton, Peng & Ann, 2008). This demonstrates that there is a need to shift perceptions to a more accurate reflection on the reality of urban schools, which will ultimately help teachers gain a more realistic picture and not feel powerless or overwhelmed by the idea of teaching in an urban school (Hampton, Peng & Ann, 2008).

It is important to note that teacher's understandings, and misunderstandings, can drastically impact their decision making in the classroom (Schultz, Jones-Walker & Chikkatur, 2008). As found in the research reviewed, this points to the need to have

effective urban education courses and provide pre-service teachers with a diverse range of experiences and knowledge. These courses can be a starting point to address stereotypes and biases that filter down into teaching practices and ultimately negatively impact students.

The perpetuation of stereotypes can also be from current teachers in urban schools. In a study by James-Wilson (1999), the researcher discussed visits to schools in an urban area in Toronto with a colleague that used to work close to the neighbourhood. This colleague described depressed neighbourhoods, poorly resourced classrooms, disrespectful students, uninvolved parents and a high degree of immigrant and ethnically diverse children who created many "challenges" related to literacy and language learning (James-Wilson, 1999).

When examining current educational practice, Solomon and Levine Rasky (2003) point out that "manifestations of racism include attitudes and practices of teachers and administrators, Eurocentric curriculum, racial incidents and harassment, streaming, assimilationist culture, lack of representation, and devaluing parental and community participation" (p.5). Particularly, the "labeling of children 'at risk', the delivery of inferior strategies of pedagogy for children in working class and immigrant neighbourhoods, biased assessment procedures with consequences of sorting children into various and selective educational streams, professionals with limited knowledge of ethnic and racial minorities relying upon psychological profiles and diagnoses that used biased instruments, and the perception of a general increase in racially-motivated harassment and violence in schools" (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003, p.5). Literature in

the field of education points out the racial undertones in many areas, including exclusion in curriculum, lack of minority teachers and differential treatment of school subjects (Islamaphobia, ESL and accents, First Nations history) (Dei, 2005). Students from diverse backgrounds feel disconnected from the curriculum and it is essential to relate material to their lives and experiences. In order to connect students' lives to curriculum, it is clear that new teachers need to learn about culturally relevant pedagogy and practices (Frankenberg, Taylor & Merseth, 2010)

As Weiner (1999) reflects on her experiences, generally "you can win their [students] confidence by making intellectual and social space in your classroom for cultural differences, acknowledging that all students bring life experiences, beliefs, and ideas that are no less worthy of examination than your own or those of classmates" (pg55-56). Teachers in urban schools need to have a wide range of knowledge about teaching strategies, since the students' needs are so different; second, they need to make material relevant to students; third, it is essential to create a sense of community in the classroom (Weiner, 1999). As Weiner (1999) recalls, it was important to "create lessons that showed...students the power of their own ideas, lessons that connected instruction to their life experiences and validated it" (p.61). This approach makes education relevant to students and allows them to connect to the material being covered. The research findings from a study by Hampton, Peng and Ann (2008) also have many implications; teacher preparation courses should emphasize the extent of diversity in urban school populations. Part of the instruction should be aimed at developing pre-service teachers' awareness of diversities not just in race and class but in ability and English language proficiency

because they need to understand the implications of these differences for curriculum planning and design, instructional strategies and teacher-student interactions (Hampton, Peng & Ann, 2008). Similarly, Dei (2003) points out that there is a need to address diversity and difference; education must take into account the different knowledge, experience and expectations of learners. It is essential to value the "different perspectives and knowledge that all people from all places have and can bring to the school system" (Dei, 2003, p.251). This will ensure that all students can find their knowledge, history and experience in schools, which further validates their experiences through inclusion and creates a sense of belonging (Dei, 2003). Without connecting material to the lived experiences of students, they "will be a physical presence in school, but disengaged in terms of their minds and souls" (Dei, 2003, p.251).

Solomon (1997) emphasizes the importance of screening materials for stereotypes and teaching with an anti-racist framework. However, it is critical to be aware of token representation and inclusion because as demonstrated through research, this can have the opposite effect and further perpetuate stereotypes. Goodwin (1997) summarizes that

Teacher education programs should focus on preparing culturally responsive or culturally relevant teachers. This means equipping our students with the skills, attitudes, materials, content, and instructional practices that will enable them to serve all children well by building classroom communities of learners, working effectively with parents, and the community, engaging themselves and their students in the critical analysis of social structures and inequities, honoring children's heritage and experiences by incorporating them into the curriculum, dealing explicitly with the controversial issues as well as questions of power and privilege and serving as advocates for children. These goals will require that teacher education programs change substantially. The profession must move away from

isolated multicultural workshops or classes, which too often emphasize the tangible aspects of culture and help to reinforce the prevalent view of multicultural education as ad hoc, episodic, and limited to a few isolated activities (p.142).

As Rose (2007) concludes, a primary goal in teaching pre-service teachers should be to foster thinking that critically questions and examines assumptions and practices.

Dee & Henkin (2002) agree that teachers need to be aware of students and their characteristics and have the skills to develop culturally responsive teaching and instructional strategies. It is essential for teachers to be committed to culturally relevant pedagogy (Groulx, 2001). Also, pre-service teachers need to be shown how to adapt pedagogy based on context and students; an important aspect of urban education courses is to show teachers how to teach curriculum, while still considering the context of the school (Schultz, Jones-Walker & Chikkatur, 2008).

In a study by Leland & Harste (2005), students in a pre-service program were exposed to books that dealt with difficult issues, such as poverty. They were asked to use these materials with their students and the teachers initially resisted using this material in their classes. The experience of pre-service teachers in this study showed that students listened and engaged in discussions when important issues were being discussed (Leland & Harste, 2009). This supports Wilson and Corbett's (2001) study of how urban students define good teachers. Including "real-life stuff" (p. 86) and relating school topics to the students' experiences was identified as one of six traits that urban students valued in a teacher (Leland & Harste, 2005).

### *Opportunities for reflection*

These courses can also provide an important opportunity for teachers to reflect on their current practices in a supportive and constructive space that encourages the exchange of thoughts and ideas (Milner, 2006). The research points to the fact that pre-service teachers need opportunities to engage with different ideas and learn how to balance curriculum expectations with relevant teaching strategies based on their classroom profile.

Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004) found that teacher education programs need to provide a space and opportunity for teachers to reflect on categories of difference, how it is defined and how it perpetuates stereotypes. Further, this helps teachers to gain an awareness of their own biases and how this will affect teaching (Johnston, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews & Kim, 2009). As well, the opportunity to critically examine their own assumptions and biases can help teacher candidates develop a broader understanding of diversity and social justice (Baldwin, Buchanan & Rudisill, 2007). Solomon and Rezai-Rashti (2000) echo this point and emphasize the need for teacher education programs to engage teacher candidates in analyzing their own racial identities and the impact on their teaching and classrooms. Further, Galma, Pica-Smith and Rosenberg (2010) also discussed the need for new teachers to have opportunities to gain understanding about race and racism in the context of their identity. This is also related to the idea of learning and unlearning previous ideas, which is a challenging but necessary process for educators (Galma, Pica-Smith & Rosenberg, 2010).

Research findings show that experience within diverse settings helps teacher candidates confront difficult issues of inequity (Baldwin, Buchanan & Rudisill, 2007).



While research has shown benefits of placement in urban environments, having experiences that do not coincide with what student teachers see as 'normal' will not be completely beneficial until they become aware of their assumptions and their effects (Groulx, 2001). There are different programs to connect student teachers to a diverse group of students', however "a key element in these types of programs is a support system that promotes reflection and cross-validation of pre-service teachers' perceptions. Without such support, raw experience can do more harm than good in changing attitudes" (Groulx, 2001, p.64). Reflection is a key process highlighted in the literature, as it is essential for teachers to identify their practices and how to improve their current strategies (Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004). Similarly, Hagiwara & Wray (2009) stated that in reference to urban school teaching placements, pre-service teachers need to have opportunities to reflect and analyze their experiences - these experiences help pre-service teachers develop a more complete understanding of working in urban settings.

However, as Johnston Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews and Kim (2009) state, it is necessary for teachers to engage in deep reflection and not just on the surface; this entails critically examining their worldviews and biases. Milner (2006) suggests relational reflection and understanding yourself in relation to others as an effective practice; this requires teachers to re-evaluate their own beliefs and behaviours and how they can reinforce stereotypes. A key implication for teacher education programs is that they must help teachers-to-be examine their own assumptions, expectations and perceptions of children of color. "Enabling teachers to examine their own understandings about diversity, invisible privilege, the culture of power, and racial identity is necessary if

misconceptions, hidden assumptions, and prejudices about the competencies and capabilities of visible racial/ethnic children are to surface" (Goodwin, 1997, p.143).

There are many implications of research for teacher education programs, including teaching student teachers how to create a democratic learning environment for all students, develop relevant instructional strategies, and teach about risks of stereotyping and how to use local community as a resource (Solomon, 1997). As Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasizes, "the attitudes of these pre-service teachers and their commitment to culturally relevant pedagogy will become crucial factors in many of their future students' chances for success in school" (Groulx, 2001, p.60). In classrooms that are becoming increasingly diverse, it is essential to provide pre-service teachers with training to work effectively with all students and treat diversity as an advantage. While many individuals look for practical strategies, there is a need to embrace diversity in general (Johnston, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews & Kim, 2009). As Weiner (1999) states, "when your classroom encourages students to share their ideas, to critically examine the knowledge each person brings to the classroom, diversity becomes an asset" (pg.26).

### ***Summary***

The current literature shows that as demographics in schools are changing, it is becoming even more important for pre-service teachers' to be prepared to teach in culturally and racially diverse classrooms. This requires teachers to examine their own beliefs and backgrounds in order to understand the various ways that equity issues affect their students. The main ideas that were discussed were changing demographics, the

challenges of working in diverse schools and the role of pre-service programs, the perceptions of urban schools and the importance of ongoing reflection for novice teachers.

This chapter focused on presenting a review of the literature related to the research questions of this study, specifically the need for skilled urban teachers as well as the importance of pre-service teacher education programs in preparing teachers to work in increasingly diverse classrooms.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### *Overview*

This chapter focuses on the methodology used in this research study. It also includes the main questions that guide the research, the data collection and analysis process as well as the limitations associated with the methodology chosen.

The overall research methodology that was adopted for this research study was a qualitative method of inquiry. The qualitative research methods that were used were appropriate due to the nature of the research problem. Qualitative methods “are ways of finding out what people do, know, think, and feel by observing, interviewing, and analyzing data” (Patton, 2002, p.94). This methodology was appropriate because the aim of this research was to look closely at the experiences of pre-service teachers and these experiences cannot be fully described through quantitative methods and statistical analysis.

The specific method utilized was case study research, which is “an approach to qualitative research [that] involves the specific and detailed study of a case or cases” (Lichtman, 2006, p.74). In this research study, the case being studied was pre-service teachers enrolled in an equity issues in education course. Case study research is used in many different fields and is commonly used in educational research (Yin, 2009). The aim of using this method was to gain greater insight and in depth information than would be possible by using quantitative methods. Case study research is a unique method because it results in “a different kind of knowledge compared to other kinds of research” (Gay,

Mills & Airasian, 2009, p.426). This type of research allows readers to relate their knowledge, experiences and understandings as they compare and contrast the case to their personal experiences (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). As classrooms become more diverse, it is essential to learn about the personal experiences of pre-service teachers' in order to shed light on the rewards and challenges of learning to develop inclusive teaching practices.

Case study research is appropriate when exploring descriptive questions (what happened?) or explanatory questions (how or why did something happen?) (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). For this study, the research questions were both descriptive and explanatory as they explored how pre-service teachers' thoughts and perspectives shifted due to their teacher education program and what insight was gained through their participation in an education course devoted to addressing issues of equity and social justice. Therefore, case study research was an appropriate methodology for this research problem.

In addition, case study research is appropriate when studying process; it is useful when examining the process by which a program had an effect on participants in a setting (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). In this study, conducting case study research provided the unique opportunity to closely follow the experiences of pre-service teachers as they progressed through their pre-service education program. This method was useful in examining whether participating in the equity issues course contributed to changes in their ideas and practices.

Further, case studies are useful when examining particular motivations and beliefs

governing participants' decisions, a specific problem, or "unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information – rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars" (Patton, 2002, p.54). This is relevant to this study because the aim was to conduct in-depth research into the experiences of pre-service teachers enrolled in a course on equity issues in education and the changes in their thoughts, beliefs and pedagogy as they progressed through their pre-service teacher education program.

### ***Data collection***

The method used for data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews. Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed for understanding and capturing "the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories" (Patton, 2002, p.21). Interviews were appropriate for this type of research because conducting interviews provided information and data that could not be obtained through other methods (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). This method provided an opportunity to examine "attitudes, interests, feelings, concerns and values" (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009, p.370). This was essential because the purpose of the research was to explore transformation of thoughts that have occurred in pre-service teachers who are working through a teacher preparation program. Specifically, a set of questions were developed prior to the interviews. This set of questions served as a guide and ensured that the interviews remained focused and consistent information was collected in all of the interviews. By using a semi-structured approach, new questions were asked based on the participants' responses (Hoepfl, 1997). This approach allowed

for important follow-up questions and gave participants an opportunity to expand on their answers and provide more information about their experiences. Open ended questions were asked in order to encourage detailed and meaningful responses that would truly capture the participants' experiences in their equity course and pre-service program. This approach provided an opportunity for thoughtful reflection from participants as they described their experiences and referenced anecdotes related to the research questions. The approach taken in this study is consistent with previous research in the field of education, which uses interviews to gain in-depth information about teacher's experiences.

In addition, observation was also used as a method to collect information. Observations usually take place in naturalistic settings; for this study, participants were observed during their equity issues in education class. For the purposes of this study, I was an unobtrusive observer in the classroom as I did not participate in the classroom activities (Lichtman, 2006). During this observation period, the pre-service teachers enrolled in the course presented their ideas about how to apply what they have learned about inclusive teaching in a practical classroom setting. This exercise was useful because it was the next step in their progression through the program as they moved from theoretical understanding to application. Observing the presentations was beneficial because it provided me with knowledge of the context of the equity issues class and I was able to listen first-hand to pre-service teachers explain their progression through the program, the challenges they faced, what they learned and how they would apply it in their own classrooms.

The data collection period for this study was primarily in November, 2010, during which time I conducted all three interviews. Following this, I observed classroom presentations in March, 2011. The presentations were based on the pre-service teachers' ideas about equity education and how to address equity issues in their teaching practice. This exercise demonstrated how they would infuse issues of diversity and equity into their everyday teaching. Between November and March, participants were taking the course on equity issues in education and expanding their knowledge about inclusive teaching. The presentations took place towards the end of the course, which gave me the unique opportunity to see how the pre-service teachers I had previously interviewed built on their ideas about how to create an inclusive classroom environment.

In terms of recruitment, pre-service teachers who were enrolled in an equity issues in education course as part of a pre-service teaching program in Ontario were approached to participate in interviews. The site chosen for this research study was a post-secondary institution in Ontario that offers a course on equity issues in education. The pre-service teachers from this institution are surrounded by diverse schools and have a variety of experiences working in diverse classrooms.

Participants were identified based on their interest and enrolment in an equity course and this was used as the main criteria for participant selection. An e-mail was sent to all students enrolled in the course explaining the purpose of the study and inviting them to participate in interviews about their experience in the equity course and their pre-service program. Following the e-mail, I visited the class during one of their sessions to explain the purpose of the research study and the types of questions that would be asked



if they chose to participate in the interviews.

Three pre-service teachers were interviewed for this study. I chose to keep the number of participants at 3 due to time limitations of the research study and to allow ample time to thoroughly explore the participants' experiences. The three participants that were interviewed for this study were given the pseudonyms of Nicholas, Kayla and Brian. Nicholas was a White male, aged 30-35, who had some previous experience working with diverse groups of people. Kayla was a White female, between the age of 25-30, who stated that she did not live in a diverse area and had little experience working with diverse groups of students. Lastly, Brian was a White male, aged 25-30, who had experience teaching in other countries and also spoke Mandarin.

All three of the interviews took place on campus at the post-secondary institution that the participants attended and were conducted one-on-one. The specific locations for the interviews were chosen by the participants to ensure that they felt comfortable opening up about their personal experiences. At the start of each interview, participants were given a letter of information and consent form to sign. The letter of information outlined the purpose of the study and what was required from participants.

Participants in this study were asked about their thoughts and experiences in regards to their progression through the pre-service teacher program and their readiness to teach in diverse classrooms.

Prior to the interviews, the three participants who volunteered for this study all agreed to have the interviews audio-recorded. This was a useful way to record the data because the interviews could be referred to for clarification and to ensure accuracy of

information. As well, this allowed me to focus solely on the interviews and create follow-up questions based on the participants' responses, as opposed to having my attention divided while attempting to listen and write notes. The interviews lasted approximately 60-75 minutes.

The audio recordings were transcribed; the date, time and coded name of participants were recorded on each transcript (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). As with any research, trustworthiness is essential in this study (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). After the interviews were initially transcribed, they were reviewed against the tape recording for a second time to ensure accuracy. To ensure validity in this qualitative research, member checking was conducted with participants (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). Following the transcribing process, the transcripts were sent out to participants for them to review and check. While the participants acknowledged receiving the transcripts, no one responded with any corrections or concerns about the content in the interview transcripts.

The ethical considerations in this study included ensuring confidentiality of participants and the sensitive information that they provided throughout the study. All of the data was labelled with dates and hard copies were locked in a file cabinet, with other information saved on a computer. Participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study, as well as how the information was going to be used. The participants were also made aware that participation was voluntary and the information they shared would remain confidential, as their names would be changed.

### ***Data analysis***

In qualitative research, inductive data analysis is utilized, whereby themes emerge out of the data that is collected (Hoepfl, 1997). During this process, no computer program or software was used for the purposes of analysis. The findings from the interviews are reported precisely, with the exception of changes made to names of people or places, to ensure that the participants' identities remain anonymous.

Using the data analysis framework outlined by Lichtman (2006), my analysis consisted of the three c's of analysis – from coding to categorizing to concepts. This framework was described in detail through 6 steps:

1. Initial coding
2. Revising initial coding
3. Developing an initial list of categories or central ideas
4. Modifying your initial list based on additional re-reading
5. Revisiting your categories and subcategories and
6. Moving from categories to themes (Lichtman, 2006, p.168).

When analyzing qualitative data, the first step is reading. To start the data analysis process, I read and re-read the transcripts to identify the main ideas that came out of each interview. I read through the interviews and marked the transcripts with codes in brackets. Following this, I organized the codes based on how often they appeared in the interviews. The codes were then categorized in order to draw concepts and main themes from the data. The themes that emerged from the analysis process were central and most meaningful to the topic being studied (Lichtman, 2006). The repetitive process that followed included reading through the text – coding chunks of information – rereading

the data – changing/adding codes – combining codes into categories (Lichtman, 2006).

By working through these steps, I began to see some common elements among the interviews that were conducted with participants. I carefully selected evidence to support the themes, which was done through the use of quotes from the interviews.

### ***Limitations***

The purpose of this research study was to explore the experiences of 3 pre-service teachers in depth. As Patton (1990) points out, “qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases” (pg.14). Although the results cannot be generalized, “approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p.14). This is a definite strength of this method because it provides a unique opportunity to gain additional insight into the topic under investigation.

Along with the strengths of the case study method, there are some limitations to using this approach. Case study research has been criticized because there are not many texts on specific procedures to follow when utilizing this method, which makes the analysis more subjective (Yin, 2009). Due to the fact that it is based on a small sample, the results from case study research cannot be generalized (Yin; 2009). However, the aim of this study was not to generalize results but rather focus on the experiences of a few individuals as they progress through their teacher preparation program. Through the use of qualitative research, specifically the case study method, I was able to gain important insight into the experiences of pre-service teachers’ as they worked through challenging

ideas and began to think critically about equity issues. The knowledge gained from this study can be used to learn about the rewards and challenges that pre-service teachers face when trying to develop inclusive classrooms and can contribute to future research in this important area.

There are also numerous strengths and limitations to using interviews as a method to collect data. Interviews allow additional insight into experiences, which cannot be achieved with other methods. As well, interviews provide an opportunity to focus on the topics of the case study (Yin, 2009). The use of semi-structured interviews ensured that the interviews remained focused, yet provided flexibility in terms of asking probing questions and gaining important feedback from pre-service teachers' about their experiences.

### **Summary**

This chapter focused on explaining the rationale for using a qualitative approach for this research study. The case study approach was chosen to capture the experiences of three pre-service teachers as they progressed through their teacher education program. The methodology included the use of semi-structured interviews to more fully understand the experiences of pre-service teachers. The qualitative data analysis process was also outlined, as well as the specific steps taken to identify the main themes and concepts from the information gathered. Lastly, the limitations of the research study were discussed.

## Chapter 4

### Research Findings

#### *Introduction*

This chapter focuses on the findings from the interviews that were conducted with three students that were enrolled in an equity issues in education class - Nicholas, Kayla and Brian. The interview questions were designed to give participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences working in diverse environments as well as their experience in their course and pre-service education program in general. The focus of this thesis is on the experiences of pre-service teachers that are taking an equity issues in education course and whether they feel that they have the skills and knowledge to be successful when teaching in diverse classrooms. This thesis also looks at the participants' ideas regarding the unique needs of students in diverse schools as well as some of the rewards and challenges of working in diverse environments.

#### *Participants*

In terms of background information of the participants, as previously mentioned the participants were all enrolled in an equity issues in education class as part of their pre-service teacher education program. Due to confidentiality, information pertaining to locations of teaching placements, the specific name of the course, the names of schools and individuals have all been changed to ensure that participants cannot be identified.

The three participants are students in a pre-service teacher education program who have chosen to enrol in an elective course about equity issues in education. Since this

course is not a mandatory requirement for their degree, their voluntary enrolment indicates an active interest in equity issues in education and how to address those issues in a classroom setting. All of the participants in this study discussed the importance of becoming aware of and addressing equity issues in their teaching. Through the interview process, it quickly became clear that the participants viewed equity issues as very important and in need of increased attention during teacher training. The participants highlighted that a main goal in their teaching practice was to take into account the various backgrounds of their students and place value on the different experiences that students bring into the classroom; however, they all struggled with how to translate their thoughts into practice.

Each interview was analyzed in order to look at the correlations between the experiences of pre-service teachers in this study and the existing literature on pre-service teacher education in relation to teaching in diverse classrooms. Currently, the literature reviewed shows that the student population is becoming more diverse, therefore it is important for teachers to be equipped with the skills to teach in culturally and racially diverse environments (Sleeter, 2001). Literature in the field of education highlights the importance of preparing teachers to work in increasingly diverse classrooms and the fact that it is essential to recognize and value the different experiences that students bring into the classroom (Rezai-Rashti, 1995). As well, previous studies show that teacher preparation courses, "if carefully designed and implemented, can have the largest impact on pre-service teachers' perceptions of urban schools" (Hampton, Peng & Ann, 2008, p.291). These courses not only educate pre-service teachers about relevant issues that will

affect their teaching but also provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers to reflect on what they are learning in a safe and open environment. This thoughtful reflection allows pre-service teachers to move beyond superficial discussions of equity and grapple with complex ideas that will increase their level of preparedness to teach in schools with a diverse student population.

The pre-service teachers who participated in this study were asked about their experiences of working in diverse environments and of the equity issues to which they were introduced through their participation in the teacher education program. Specifically, they were asked about what skills and knowledge they felt are important to be successful teachers as well as how their perspectives have changed as a result of the equity issues course and pre-service education program in general. Using the data analysis framework by Lichtman (2006), there were 4 main themes that emerged from the interviews. The main themes were 1) the characteristics and needs of students in diverse environments, 2) the understanding and practice of equity, 3) the idea and practice of inclusivity and 4) changes in perspective as a result of the equity course and in the context of the teacher education program. This chapter will closely examine each theme that was identified in the interview data analysis in relation to existing literature.

### ***The characteristics and needs of students in diverse environments***

As a starting point in my interviews, the pre-service teachers enrolled in the equity issues in education course were asked to describe the characteristics and needs of students in diverse environments. This was an important question because it allowed for a better understanding of the participants' beliefs about students in urban schools and the



various issues that may affect their educational experience.

When discussing urban schools and students in diverse communities, all of the participants agreed that these students have unique needs that must be considered and addressed in the classroom. When asked about the characteristics of schools in diverse communities and students that attend these schools, Nicholas said:

I guess what I would think the characteristics would be is that there is a wide range of diversity, not only in ethnicity but also in academic ability, but also behavioral ability - I would also might picture also urban schools maybe it's relatable to socio-economic placement and things of that nature where urban schools have sort of a stigma - the fact that they are low socio-economic - they are **urban**, they are **urban** communities (*emphasis placed by participant*) - the idea that I am trying to emphasize is this sort of notion of inner-city...the relationship between urban and inner city - you know what I mean? And I am not trying to make a distinction between urban and rural but that the word urban has a connotation associated with it as being inner city - therefore inner city has a connotation with it as being impoverished and as being low socio-economic and again, with the connotation of diversity...you know, ethnic diversity and things of that nature.

Nicholas noted the implications of the word 'urban' and the stigma that is often attached to this term. Further, when talking about students attending schools in urban communities, he added:

there would be a low socio-economic playing field, sort of and that there would be an increased diverse student population, which I hope would lead to increased diverse teaching population as well. The student population would be yeah, sort of the diversity in terms of ethnicity but also economics and things like that. Probably, oh in addition, probably also a lot more language acquisition...ELL programs, because again what I think when I hear urban is I think inner city, I think centralized and things like that.

Nicholas's thoughts are consistent with the characteristics that are mentioned in various definitions of urban communities. Milner (2006) broadly defines an urban context as one that is culturally and racially diverse, has a greater population of ELL students and students that come from a lower socio-economic background. Nicholas also mentions that due to the fact that there is a very diverse student population, that there should be a more diverse teaching population. This is an interesting point because he implies that it is important for teachers to learn how to teach diverse student populations.

Kayla also emphasized the idea of diverse backgrounds but added that working in a school in a diverse community can be a learning opportunity for educators. Specifically, in the school:

children come from a diversity of backgrounds and so there really needs to be a team in place to address some of the issues that some students might face at that school. I think that there is, it is a rich environment, there is a lot you can learn from being in an urban school...and there are also different needs that need to be met in that too. So as teachers, I think that you need to educate yourself if you are going to be working in an urban school about some of the different issues about equity and some of the different issues that some of your students may be facing in order to accommodate all of the students in your classroom.

Kayla placed the responsibility on teachers to learn about the community surrounding their schools and issues that directly affect students living in the local community. This coincides with findings by Frankenberg, Taylor and Merseeth (2010), which showed that it is essential to relate material to the lives and experiences of students so that they do not feel disconnected from the material being taught in their classes. This was also emphasized by other students in the equity issues class during their presentation, in which

they noted that it is key for teachers to educate themselves and view learning as a continuous process (Classroom Observation, March 10, 2011). Further, she acknowledged the variety of experiences that are represented in classrooms when she added:

I would say that they (*students*) are coming from a variety of backgrounds, you might get...you will get people from all over the world with all different experiences so some students might not have the same understandings or abilities or...learn in the same way as students, as other students do, so you need to be able to differentiate your teaching.

Echoing Kayla's point about working in urban schools as being a learning opportunity for teachers, Brian stated:

personally I feel that an urban school would be a good opportunity for a teacher to learn a lot about specifically multiculturalism...you get the opportunity to work with a specific demographic of people and through that understanding it can give you a greater understanding of yourself as a teacher and as a member of the community and you could look at specific areas in which you could enrich students' lives to better realize differences between each other and the world and different cultures and it is important that we as teachers try to differentiate our instruction methods depending on what groups of people we are teaching. For example, if we are teaching predominantly Anglo-Saxon students, it is probably good to try to put things in terms that they can understand yet are very international issues and international experiences so that they can have a greater understanding themselves of being global citizens or something like that.

He also highlighted the importance of differentiating instruction and trying to remain culturally relevant in order to relate material to students in a context that they can understand. This is a point that is reiterated in literature about successful urban teachers

as it is important for students' to feel as if their experiences and backgrounds are acknowledged and respected in the classroom. As Weiner (1999) points out, "you can win their [students] confidence by making intellectual and social space in your classroom for cultural differences, acknowledging that all students bring life experiences, beliefs, and ideas that are no less worthy of examination than your own or those of classmates" (pg.55-56). Similarly, Dei (2003) stresses that there is a need to address diversity and difference; education must take into account the different knowledge, experience and expectations of learners. It is essential to value the "different perspectives and knowledge that all people from all places have and can bring to the school system " (Dei, 2003, p.251). This will ensure that all students can find their knowledge, history and experience in schools, which further validates their experiences through inclusion and creates a sense of belonging (Dei, 2003). These two participants recognized the importance of connecting material to the actual experiences of students; this will lead to students being more actively engaged in their education because the material they will be using will be relevant and representative of their experiences.

When discussing what other words come to mind when thinking about urban schools and students in these schools, Brian continued:

Yeah, diversity definitely, multicultural, varied experiences, a myriad or variety of economic means, different heritages, different religions, different worldviews, different interests of what should be taught in the curriculum and ultimately different life paths that the students want and what they want to choose for their career and future.

Further, this response added to his belief that due to the fact that there are individuals

from various backgrounds and with different experiences, there likely will be differences in what they think should be taught and emphasized in schooling. Continuing his thoughts about students in diverse schools, Brian added:

I would look at it as a diverse group of people, it doesn't necessarily have to be one specific culture of people or many cultures, it is a good cross-section or slice of society because that would encompass many different experiences because little Johnny, his parents might be plumbers and little Mohammed's parents might be doctors or something like that and looking at that different experience of growing up so different parents would ask their children to espouse different life goals or different career choices or paths and they would have different ways of motivating their children.

This built on his previous ideas that because there are so many different experiences represented in a classroom, it is important to take into account those experiences when developing material and considering pedagogy. Reflecting on his time teaching in other countries, Brian stated that "living in China really gave me a good sense of how people can live so close together yet lead such different lives". This was a very telling statement because he acknowledges that although individuals may live in the same community, they all have different experiences and backgrounds. It is critical to recognize that there are individual differences that exist within communities, which must also be considered as opposed to assuming that everyone that belongs to a specific group can be placed into the same category; if individual differences are not acknowledged, stereotypes can be perpetuated through essentialization.

Another guiding question in my research was looking at what skills the participants thought were needed to be successful teachers in urban schools. This was an

important question to examine in order to learn about whether the study participants thought that they were developing the skills to be successful in diverse environments throughout their pre-service education program. When discussing skills and dispositions that are significant to being successful in diverse environments, the participants focused on the importance of being open minded. There has been research in the area of which dispositions are helpful for teachers working in culturally and racially diverse classrooms, which shows that teachers need to learn how to be flexible in order to cope with unpredictable schools and become aware of their own biases and prejudices (Groulx, 2001).

Nicholas struggled with a term that he thought was important but was criticized for using:

What type of skills...I don't know, I was criticized for this word, but I am going to use it anyway, I have been criticized a number of times for using this word - it is the idea of tolerance. Some people have said tolerance is a weighted word, it is difficult to understand what tolerance incorporates or what tolerance...but I think that is essentially what you need to be successful in an urban school, in a very diverse school. Not only with ethnicities, not only with issues of social justice and issues of equality, equity, things of that nature but in terms of behavior problems, even with academic learning, the faculties of education are constantly talking to us about differentiation, differentiation, differentiation, so you need to have a very tolerant sort of teaching style and a very sort of accepting teaching style to be able to incorporate so much into your classroom.

Nicholas struggled with the idea of tolerance and the fact that it was a weighted word; using the word tolerance can have negative connotations and can be related to the difference as a deficit perspective because it does not suggest an open and equal approach

to recognizing differences. There seemed to be a little bit of confusion about the word "tolerance" as he also commented that you have to be accepting. When asked to explain further about this idea of "tolerance", he added:

it is about compassion...tolerance, compassion and showing care, whether you are from Sudan, whether you are from Afghanistan, it is not about treating everyone equal, that is not the question right, because again in the faculty of education, everybody is telling us...to be treated equal is not that everybody gets the same, it is everybody gets what he or she needs, right...so it is a matter of fairness, it is a matter of equity as fairness, justice as fairness, John Rawls says that...justice as fairness. You know, so I guess in order to be successful in a diverse school is that you need, you need that sort of fairness you need that sort of sense of compassion, justice and tolerance.

When I further probed his ideas and asked him what tolerance meant to him personally and in relation to teaching, he expanded on his idea of tolerance:

Yeah, I guess that is a good question. Maybe it is related to the ideas of accepting people for what they bring to the classroom environment, accepting their diversity I guess - I don't really like saying that. I think it is about acceptance, I think it is about showing that compassion, I think that to be tolerant is to be compassionate, to be tolerant is to be accepting, to be tolerant is to be supportive, to be tolerant is to be encouraging.

Nicholas talked in detail about being tolerant but also mentioned many other characteristics that he thought were important in order to be successful. We spent quite a bit of time discussing the idea of tolerance and the fact that it is a weighted word. Through the course of our interview, he began to see how it was weighted when used in the context of education and the meaning that can be implied through the use of the word tolerance.

On the other hand, Kayla continued to emphasize the need for teachers to educate themselves to be successful when working with a diverse group of students:

Ok, I think that teachers need to educate themselves about the student population that they are working with before they take on any stance in the classroom like, they need to be well rounded and make sure that they are including all their students, they need to make sure that...how do you word this, make sure that as a classroom, they need to set the tone at the beginning of the class, or the beginning of the year, that they are going to be more like a community and that they are going to all work together for the year so they are going to be like a team rather than like, stating out the obvious differences in the classroom, they need to more recognize that they are a team and help include everyone to make them feel welcome so I think, yeah, teachers need to be knowledgeable about everyone and everything and they need to have an open mind.

She expanded on the reasons behind this by adding "I think it is important so that the students all feel like they have an equal opportunity to learn and to succeed no matter what their background". Kayla indicates that it is valuable to learn about the student population, which also appears in literature. The importance of learning about and understanding the socio-cultural and socio-economic characteristics of local communities was highlighted in research by James-Wilson (1999). This is essential for new teachers because they need to have knowledge about the student population and the many ways that context and socio-economic status impact students and their educational experiences. As well, 'good' teaching in diverse environments emphasizes the importance of teachers respect for students' everyday lives and cultural backgrounds (Smith & Smith, 2008). Weiner (1999) also discusses the importance of developing a classroom community in order to ensure that all students feel comfortable and safe sharing their ideas and



experiences. Kayla refers to the idea of creating a community and developing a team mentality in her classroom. While discussing culturally relevant teachers, it has been shown that building a community of learners in the classroom greatly contributes to student success (Smith & Smith, 2008). This was also echoed in the classroom presentations, when students noted that developing a community in the classroom helps establish a student-centered classroom (Classroom Observation, March 10, 2011)

Brian started by acknowledging the importance of being open minded when working with students:

For me personally, an open mind...open mind is one of the most important things and understanding what you bring to the classroom and what strengths and weaknesses you have as a teacher that you can identify and work with the students and you can improve yourself as a teacher and improve the students. It is important that you think about your own background and your students background...don't compare but look at areas where you might not be familiar so for example, I grew up in a non-religious household but I taught very religious students so being familiar with the religion helped a lot so that I found very important, being able to be flexible with your lessons, have a variety of lessons, a variety of ways of explaining things and a variety of instructional methods that could apply to many different students...being able to switch it up every 15 minutes or so, so that students can stay mentally clicked on versus not being so mentally aware of what you are teaching.

Brian explains his views about the importance of considering your own background and the backgrounds of your students. This is essential because it helps teachers understand their students better, but as he pointed out it is important not to fall into the trap of comparing experiences. This is consistent with research by Hagiwara and Wray (2009), which points out that teacher preparation programs need to help teachers assess self-

knowledge because this will help prospective teachers view themselves as members of a diverse society and to value other cultures. Also, Brian highlighted the importance of having a variety of ways to explain material in order to appeal to all students and their different learning strengths. The need for a variety of instructional methods is highlighted in a substantial amount of literature in education. It is essential for teachers to have a wide range of knowledge about teaching strategies because the needs of students are so different (Weiner, 1999). He added the importance of remaining positive to be successful:

And being positive, being very positive about yourself and being a positive influence, a stable influence for your students, taking time sometimes when you have got the world at your doorstep, you've got to take a minute to step back and reflect about yourself as a teacher and reflect about what is happening in the classroom and reflect about who you are and where you think you are going with the class and the lessons. It is important that if it is not working, talk to the students and see why it is not working and be personable but not personal, so approachable yet you are not trying to be a friend, you are just trying to be a good person to guide these students and help them out and sometimes you have to be authoritarian and you have to be a mean person to enforce your rules but for the most part, relationships, yeah, relationships.

The importance of developing relationships and being reflective were also key skills Brian discussed when referencing teaching in a diverse environment. He comments on being reflective about his own strengths and weaknesses as a teacher, which has been referenced numerous times in the literature as an effective practice for teachers. It has been shown that good teachers use reflective practices and are flexible in their approach to teaching (Smith & Smith, 2008). As mentioned in the work of Titone (2005), it is essential for teachers to continually assess themselves and improve their own professional

abilities in order to successfully teach all students. Also, Brian described teaching as a two-way learning process, whereby students take an active role in their education and teachers and students work together. This is described as “getting to we”, which is an approach that views students as a resource for teachers to learn about their teaching and allows students to play a role in making decisions about teaching (Stairs, 2010).

### ***The understanding and practice of equity***

The participants in this study enrolled in the course about equity issues in education as part of their teacher education program; however, this course was not a mandatory requirement. The participants had different reasons behind why they took this course but the general consensus was to get a better understanding of equity issues in education and the impact of these issues at the classroom level.

Nicholas thought that the general idea of the course was valuable and commented:

I saw the idea that it was about issues of social inequalities, things of that nature and I thought hey, I have experience with that, I have interest in that, I thought it would be a challenging course, I thought that it would be a good, I just thought...to look at issues of, I have always been interested in issues of society and how society works and why we do the things we do, what influences and makes us do the things that we do, so I thought it would be a good examination into that idea.

Kayla recognized the fact that she could be working in a diverse environment and should take the opportunity to become more informed about equity issues:

well originally actually I wanted to take it and then it was full or something so I couldn't take it and I was upset because I wanted to take it because I am from a place with not a lot of diversity so I wanted to broaden my understanding and become more aware of some of the

equity issues and things like that because in today's world, I could be teaching...I could be in an urban environment and I could be working with students that I don't have a lot of background and experience with people from other cultures so I wanted to like, yeah, broaden my knowledge and understanding of all different types of people from everywhere. And I thought that this course would help me, to help me, prepare me for teaching those students and maybe give me some ideas of what to do in my classroom to help include and accommodate for everyone. And it was full and then it, then I actually picked two other things and they didn't work in my schedule so the office, they put me in.

Due to her limited exposure to individuals from other cultures and backgrounds, Kayla approached this course as an opportunity to gain knowledge about students that she will likely be working when she begins teaching. She also added the importance she placed on gaining strategies that she could use in her own classroom in the future:

I was hoping to get an understanding about different ethnicities and also, yeah, a major thing was to help me learn some practical strategies for the classroom, like some ideas that you could use for anything like, for dealing with a diversity of students. So yeah, that is that I was mostly hoping for.

As shown in previous research, teacher candidates often enrol in courses to learn effective strategies that can be used in their classrooms in the future. As Johnston, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews and Kim (2009) concluded that although many individuals look for practical strategies, there is a need to embrace diversity in general. With this approach, diversity is viewed as an asset and then strategies are built based on classroom profile.

Brian was also looking for a general understanding of equity issues as they pertain to education and thought this course could expand on his previous knowledge:

Ok, I honestly didn't really have a great grasp of equity, I still am struggling with equity, I looked at our requirements, I looked at the course and I was thinking yeah, this would make a lot of sense. I took global studies, it would be great to bring that aspect into it, you can talk about your cultural experience, it is good to take a look at understanding things, yeah I am not so good at discussing things, I didn't realize there would be so much discussion of issues, I thought it would be more, these are the issues, take a look at it, think about it, discuss it a little.

Overall, the participants in this study recognized that since classrooms are becoming more diverse, it is important to learn about issues that affect students from various cultures and how to address those issues at the classroom level. Their experience, or lack thereof, with culturally diverse groups was a factor in their decision to enrol in this course because they wanted to get a better sense of relevant issues and expand on their previous knowledge base.

When discussing their understanding and practice of equity, all of the participants struggled with the concepts of multicultural education and anti-racist education. When asked about the similarities and differences between the two frameworks, they admitted that this course on equity issues was the first time they heard the term anti-racist education. Nicholas shared that this was the first time he had been introduced to the term anti-racist education:

The idea of the separation between multicultural education and anti-racist education, I didn't really know that there was a difference between the two because I had never heard the term antiracist education before.

One of the challenges that Nicholas was having with this term was based on his past experiences in education:

I grew up in the 1990's that was very prevalent in my education and formal education stating that, you know we are a multicultural society and you know, everybody was embracing multiculturalism and the ideas of multiculturalism.

Nicholas continued that he was unsure about the differences between the two concepts and it became clear through our interview that he was still grappling with the ideas being presented to him:

And I was not really exposed to the idea of anti-racist education until this class, and I am still not really clear on...I know that my professors have explained the difference between the two but I am still not really clear on it. One thing that I took from that discussion is that multicultural education is more about tokenism, you know...according to them and according to the academics, it is more about tokenism and recognition of difference rather than anti-racist education being more the sort of...implementation of practices that do not seclude or do not differ or do not...maybe equating to the idea of fairness again.

Nicholas also had issues with the term anti-racist, as he explained that there are a lot of connotations associated with the terminology:

Because antiracist is assuming that the education system in itself is racist - well, if we have to implement an antiracist education policy in schools, then doesn't that basically say that the current situation is that it racist education? You know what I mean, which I have not seen any of...

Reflecting on his experiences to this point, Nicholas did not see any evidence of racism in education. This reveals that he has not considered the significance of looking at which experiences are represented and importantly whose experiences are excluded in textbooks and other materials that are used on a daily basis.

Kayla also commented on the use of terms and that she preferred the term

multicultural education to anti-racist education:

I think multicultural education is more about like integrating everyone and making sure people feel included and is, in my perspective, it is more positive than anti-racist because anti-racist, you are tackling negative prejudices and things like that, that people might have and talking about how some people are racist and trying to like ensure that there isn't racism in your classroom and trying to make people accepting of others but multicultural, I think you are making everyone aware of, that there are different ethnicities and things like that but it is more, I get a more positive feeling from multiculturalism...

Her response is consistent with research done by Solomon and Levine-Rasky (2003), which found that "generally speaking, multicultural education is regarded as a positive and preventative approach to equity education, while anti-racist education is regarded as a negative or reactive approach to undesirable situations" (pg.43). As well, since discussions around race are complex, new teachers are often hesitant and unsure about to address these issues. As Dei (2003) recognizes, there is discomfort around the topic of racism, which is part of the reason that it is not discussed; this is problematic because race is an important aspect of identity and a source of privilege.

The idea of tokenism is one that was discussed in detail in the interview with Nicholas. He explained his perspective on tokenism in depth:

I will say that there is a certain validity to the token if along with it, you implement critical thinking, you implement historical context, you implement you know, and maybe that is the crux. You can eat the food from Peru if you want to, no one should say that you can't do that as an educational tool, but you need to do that in the framework of what does this say about the culture that we are looking at. You can, I don't know where I am going with this but our class discussion today was about Christmas, decorating classroom doors at Christmas with wreaths and stuff like

that, and we have been studying a little bit in our class indoctrination of religion and religious indoctrination in the classroom and you can't...instill morality and what is the sense of morality, whose morality and things like of that nature so the idea of Christmas in itself has become secularized and has become a token sort of holiday. There is no meat to it anymore, there is no value to it anymore, except for the value of kindness and the value of appreciation and the value of love and care, right, which is sort of a...which could or could not be a universal morality that we are implementing in the schools right. So, you could take the token Christmas theme but if you put a historical context to it and you put...I guess what I am saying is that you take that token Christmas, you take the token Kwanza, you take the token Hanukkah and what other religious practices happen at this time of year and you can put it in its own sort of framework. I like to use the idea of umbrella, you can put it under its own umbrella sort of as a notion of love, you know what I mean. You don't have to say, you know, so you are taking in the diversity, you are taking in the multicultural aspect of each thing but you are using it in a framework of loving your neighbor and there is not a religion in the world that is going to go against that, there is not a religious practice that is going to say don't do that.

Nicholas focused on finding commonalities between different practices as a way to address diversity, specifically during the holiday season. He expanded further on the potential relevance and usefulness of tokenism:

You put something behind it...but you can't necessarily ignore the eating of the food of Peru either because it is still relevant, it is still culturally relevant. Like studying Aboriginal peoples and you know, the token celebration would be to look at the powwows or to see them with their feathers or things of this nature, but historically speaking that is something that was in the past and we can't see them as that people anymore but at the same time, they still have powwows, that is still a very culturally important event for them so we can't ignore the sort of token, do you know what I mean? We have to...when you introduce Hanukkah into your classroom or if you are going to introduce



Hanukkah into your classroom, the idea of the menorah, yes it is a token of what Hanukkah represents but there is a valid like, you can use that sort of token symbol as a means of getting at what it represents, what it means...

From his perspective, Nicholas believed that using token symbols can be a starting point to educating students about certain holidays. He emphasized that the token symbols need to be used in conjunction with information about cultures, their practices and significant holidays. However, he talked in detail about expanding on the token practices and this moves away from the definition of tokenism to providing more background to students beyond the symbols and practices that are typically associated with different cultures.

In my interview with Brian, he described his experiences as a student in elementary school:

One thing I really enjoyed when I was in elementary school, primarily it was all Caucasian, we had something called Cavalcade which was something where the top floor of the school was all ESL students, adult students learning English, and they would come and they would share their culture with us for a week. So we could go upstairs to different rooms which would be...so this is the Egyptian room, so you learn about Egyptian culture for one day and then we would learn about different cultures so I mean, we think of food as something we all share and it is an easily consumable way of sharing cultural beliefs but even wearing clothes from a different culture would give you that sense, like whoa I look a lot different in this than say for example, wearing a humbuk in Korea, I looked very different than I would wearing a Western business suit but the humbuk in Korea is seen as a form of a business suit and people wear that business suit to work and so, you would look at yourself like I look different, it is a lot more colourful than business suits here so perhaps having opportunities for students to dress up but at the same time you get yourself into things like Orientalism and stuff like that and how you as a Westerner look at the East and you get into all of that so at this moment, it is a lifelong project

that I probably will say is undefined at the moment, it is something that is probably one of the most difficult things in teaching you will encounter and there is no easy solution, there's many solutions but you have to understand yourself before you are able to teach it and that is something that takes a lot of time.

When we continued to discuss how something like this could have potential negative effects, Brian recognized that:

Yeah, that is only one side of the culture and you don't want them to think about just one side of the culture. I mean culture is a complex, organic being that is constantly changing so everything that is in Canada is Canadian culture in some sense or shape or form and constantly changing...television, food, drink, clothing, air, building, architecture, classes, education, recreation, sports, many other things I can't think of at the moment....so how do you teach everything yet make it accessible? And how can you do that for 200 different, 500 different cultures in the world? I don't know...

His last comment indicated that while he believed in the importance of expanding on the one side of culture that is often taught, the challenge lies in how to dedicate an appropriate amount of time and teach about the vast number of cultures that are represented in schools. Similar to Nicholas, Brian touched on tokenism in our discussion about multicultural education and anti-racist education. He also described the ideas that had been discussed in the equity issues class in regards to multicultural education and anti-racist education:

Ohh, multicultural education and anti-racist education, those two....yeah, anti-racist education, we were very sticky in that class about what our group consensus was, we came up with education that looks at the origin of racism and making that origin, exploring that origin and looking at why we think it is racist and why we think it is bad or good or whatever so we need to definitely make each other

aware...anti-racist education, make each other aware that perhaps there is a better way to look at one another than the mainstream way of looking at each other. Multicultural education, our general consensus was that multicultural education was a lip service, like a general tourist curriculum of many different cultures. We have argued is it better to look at say three cultures specifically versus ten cultures and focus on three cultures or have a broader view of ten cultures, which one is better? And we didn't agree, so we are still working on that one.

When discussing multicultural and anti-racist education, Rezai-Rashti (1995) stated that while "the central assumption of multicultural education is that sensitization and celebration of difference can counteract biased and prejudiced attitudes among Canadians, anti-racist education concentrates on examining the histories and the practices that prejudice supports" (p.6). Similar to the findings of Mujawamariya and Mahrouse (2004), pre-service teachers in this study also tended to ignore systemic power and focus on similarities and not differences between the two frameworks. The participants in this study did not have much exposure to anti-racist education as a framework and had just started understanding the differences between anti-racist education and multicultural education. Due to the fact that the pre-service teachers in this study were still unclear about the differences between the two frameworks, it was difficult for them to explain how their teaching would be different if they were to use an anti-racist framework as opposed to multicultural education. When asked about how the two approaches would differ when applied to a classroom, Kayla explained:

Ok, so if I was doing anti-racist, an example of anti-racist teaching...one thing that I might do is have the students make posters or something like that in the classroom about maybe like, some kind of...I don't know...about like some kind of like racist thing but not really racist, like an issue

and maybe have like a red line and be like and have a different idea of how you can change it to not be racist anymore like, be like instead of looking at this person and thinking that they are like, they have done horrific acts or something like put yourself in their shoes and think about, or give them another look, don't...like maybe posters campaigning kind of thing like for antiracism I guess...

On the other hand:

For multicultural, like I think a way that I would teach multiculturalism maybe is having a multicultural fair and just getting everyone aware of the different like ethnicities, backgrounds and cultures around the world like maybe have some students pick a country and have them study that country and then have it on display and have like, students like walk around with maybe passports or something like that and have them go and stamp the passport when they have visited a station and learned about it and have like, invite other students in the school to come in, yeah.

Kayla focused on racism and how to change beliefs, as opposed to considering the origins of racism. Her view on multicultural education is consistent with literature that describes multiculturalism as a less critical approach, focused on an on the surface understanding of cultures (Solomon & Rezai-Rashti, 2000). Discussing the anti-racist and multicultural education frameworks, Brian added:

Personally, multicultural education I believe is important because in what other framework are we going to make our students aware of each other and aware that the world is not monocultural or not just one of something, there is many....there is many different peoples, there is many different ways of doing the same thing, there is many different religions, many different foods, etc. Anti-racist education, as a class you need to try and have an open environment and try to keep things non-labeled and keep your students aware so you know, there is for example, in an urban classroom, there is three African-Canadians, and then four Asian-Canadians and three East Indian-Canadians and then ten Caucasian-Canadians, you have to be aware

that you can't be color blind in that class because these students are all different and if you treat them all the same, "oh yes how was your Christmas?", how is that going to apply to an East Indian person who celebrates Holi or Diwali so on and that is, that won't cut it so you have to be aware of who they are as a person, you have to be aware of what they are but at the same time, keep it a safe environment where they can be open to each other and not segregate each other, which is very difficult because we as people love to group each other and we automatically go to whatever group is most familiar.

Brian touched on the fact that it is human nature and almost a natural instinct to group and categorize people. In order to gain a true awareness of students and their backgrounds, an individual must move beyond their first instinct to categorize based on some characteristic(s). The idea of taking a colorblind approach is also prevalent in educational research and as Brian began to explain, there are many flaws of a colorblind approach to teaching, schooling and education in general (Dei, 2005).

An interesting point that came up in two of the interviews was the idea that the participants did not see any instances of racism or inequity in their placements and classrooms. Nicholas reflected on his practicum experience:

But in my practicum, I saw no issues of social justice, I saw...I had very ethnic variations, racial variations, in my classroom and I saw no racism towards them. I saw no gender issues between the boys and girls, I saw no, no evidence that there was an unjust classroom situation or an inequitable situation because of the diverse nature of it. I did not see any evidence of it.

Similarly, Kayla reflected on her practicum placement:

Ok, so in my last practicum, I did have an experience working in an urban school and it was a school, there was a very diverse population of students from all over the world that were there. I really enjoyed it because I found that the

students were very accepting of everybody, I didn't notice like any kind of discrimination at all. The teachers would announce on the announcements the specific holiday that was happening for a specific ethnicity or religion. They would be like "Today is...blah blah blah....day" and I had no idea what it was but there are many students that are affected by that and they tried to incorporate everyone, everyone was involved. They had uniforms for gym, which was good I thought because it eliminated some of the like issues with different kinds of dress and stuff like that so everybody had the same opportunities to like participate because you had to wear a uniform for gym. But students weren't afraid, or didn't...they were proud of where they came from I found for that school like, they would talk about it and yeah, it was a very good, welcoming, cohesive environment.

There is still a need to understand that equity issues affect everyone and practices need to be examined critically. As mentioned in literature, the status quo is often just accepted without looking deeper at the implications of daily practice. As Rose (2007) concludes, a primary goal in teaching pre-service teachers should be to foster thinking that critically questions and examines assumptions and practices. Nicholas described his experiences during his classroom placement:

In all honesty, I found the busyness of the classroom, the expectations of a teacher, the constant management or what I like to refer to as over management...negates all issues of diversity.

He continued:

Ok, because what you are doing is that you are, what I found ok, and maybe this is my perception of teaching and what teaching is or what it may not be...you are trying to survive, in a sense and it is probably, I am a new teacher, I don't have the experience at it, and but it felt as though...you could see it though as a matter of survival. How do you get through the day, how do you teach what you are supposed to teach, and how do you combat...and

this is not necessarily relatable only to urban schools, I see it as a sort of a systemic thing within public schools itself...is ok, you are from Sudan, you are from Afghanistan, that is great but we got shit to teach, we got shit to learn and I got you know, like kids misbehaving, you need to sit down, you know like, and that is what I...that is what I experienced, that is what I saw...that is what I saw.

In his experiences, there was simply no time to look at equity issues. This reflects the reality that teachers may feel overwhelmed in their classroom and they are merely trying to get through the day. In this case, all issues of diversity get placed on the back burner and daily practices are not examined critically. However, in this situation, addressing diversity was not a priority; the focus was on classroom management and getting through lessons. The key is to infuse issues of diversity into daily practices and not view this as another thing that needs to be done in the classroom.

Courses about equity issues can also provide an important opportunity for teachers to reflect on their current practices in a supportive and constructive space that encourages the exchange of thoughts and ideas (Milner, 2006). Reflection is a key process highlighted in the literature, as it is essential for teachers to identify their practices and how to improve their current strategies (Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004).

As Brian talks about his experience in the course:

the way the discussions happen, I know [the Professors] both have huge bodies of experience and both have huge understandings but they don't necessarily bring that understanding into the class, they let us as undergraduate students duke it out with each other and discuss the issues and develop our own understanding of contexts so I would assume that they are trying to just make us as students more aware of our place in society and our place of understanding and that is probably the way they set it up, so

that they don't have to teach it but let us realize through our experiences what we are learning.

This opportunity to critically examine assumptions and biases can help teacher candidates develop a broader understanding of diversity and social justice (Baldwin, Buchanan & Rudisill, 2007). As well, Solomon and Rezai-Rashti (2000) emphasize the need for teacher education programs to engage teacher candidates in analyzing their own racial identities and the impact on their teaching and classrooms. As Liggett and Finley (2009) highlight, "for White teacher candidates in particular, to actually talk about what it means to be White is often a new experience or one that they have had little opportunity to do" (p.37). This is similar to Brian's experience, as he explains why he thought it was important to take the equity issues course:

I personally found that it would offer me, as a Caucasian male, the opportunity to see things from different perspectives and another chance to put shoes on that necessarily wouldn't be put on in the regular context of my life so I read a lot of articles that have challenged my very core of existence and I was aware of white privilege but I wasn't necessarily aware of it in the same sense that it has come up and developed in the class and I didn't realize...I did know that colonialism and imperialism has had great impact on the world but I didn't realize how much detriment it has done in some cases and how a lot of people take for granted their role in society and their place and so that has really made me question myself and who I am as a member of society and there seems to be, I would equate the Anglo-Saxon experience to be a pond... You throw a rock in and you see how far it sinks, you could get a chance to really look beyond the top of the surface and really see little bits, I think I have just started...I threw my first pebble in so I have just started looking...just in the process of looking at my experience, in my family my makeup is 90% European and the 10% is Aboriginal Canadian and there is not really much focus on the Aboriginal within my family, we don't really talk about it very much at all so it is there



but we don't have much cultural connection to it and so it also helps me to gain a better perspective on what it is to be a Caucasian or Anglo-Saxon Canadian and look at that experience within our cultural context and that course is challenged and forced me to look at things definitely that I wouldn't have looked at so easily. It is also a very different set up of class than you are used to, so it is absolutely heavily discussion based, whereas students we are used to sitting down, having our heads open, imparting all of the knowledge, closing our heads and going on with the day so that way, it has really changed my thinking of what classes can be and for higher learning and higher understanding of concepts so it has been an interesting process for sure.

Brian explains this process as challenging but helpful in expanding his learning. Gehrke (2005) found that for successful teachers, knowing one's own cultural and social identity helps teachers understand students, their identities and experiences; with this understanding, teachers can create connections with students and this is important in order for genuine learning to take place.

### ***The idea and practice of inclusivity***

A challenge that was communicated by the participants was how to apply their learning in practice and create inclusive classrooms. Inclusion is a way to produce settings in which all students, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses, are part of the classroom learning community and succeed together academically (Titone, 2005).

Generally, the participants communicated that they did support ideas of equity and fairness, but were unsure about how to translate this into classroom practice. Similarly, in their classroom presentations, other pre-service teachers enrolled in the equity issues course agreed that it was challenging to bridge theory and practice (Classroom Observation, March 10, 2011). This echoes research that shows that while new teachers

believe in equity, they are unsure about when and how to accommodate (Johnston, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews & Kim, 2009). Dei (2005) also emphasized that the key is making the step from acknowledgement of these ideas to effective practice and action.

During an interview, one of the participants commented that he considered himself to be an equitable person. While talking about the rewards of working in diverse environments, Nicholas commented:

yeah, because I consider myself to be a very equitable person. I find that when you treat people with respect, you get treated with respect in return. You treat people equitably; in turn do you not want to be treated equitable?

He discussed being equitable but, previously in our interview, he reflected on his practicum experience and noted that the classroom was too busy to take into account issues of equity and fairness. It seems that in Nicholas's case, there was disconnect between the beliefs that he communicated and what actually happened in the classroom setting. This is consistent with research by Leland and Harste (2005), which found that there may be inconsistency between what pre-service teachers think and practice. A challenge for teacher preparation programs is to help new teachers translate their thoughts and beliefs into actual practice.

When asked about the rewards and challenges of working in a diverse environment, Nicholas discussed the idea of inclusivity as a challenge:

ok, the challenge of inclusivity, where does inclusivity start, where does it stop, how do you know the limits of inclusivity, are there limits to inclusivity? When it comes to religious holidays, when it comes to holidays in general, when it comes to celebrating Halloween, some kids don't

do it, Thanksgiving, some kids don't do it. Where is the, yeah, how do you balance that, how do you balance what the societal norms of Halloween or Christmas or Easter or summer holidays or anything...Remembrance Day. In my social studies class this week, somebody did a presentation on Remembrance Day and how to teach Remembrance Day...well not how to teach but resources to use to teach Remembrance Day and things of that nature. And there were some critiques about it from the professor stating that you have to be careful when you teach Remembrance Day because there are current wars going on and things of that nature. Ok, so then I guess the...because of the idea of inclusivity, where do you...when do you say yes, we can study Remembrance Day without referring to the boy from Sudan who comes from a war torn country and lived in a refugee camp - he doesn't think that war is good...but Remembrance Day, and I wanted to say this in my class, Remembrance day is not praising war, it is not glorifying the essence of war, it is just remembering, it is just acknowledging that certain freedoms that we have in this culture, in this community, are given to us because of sacrifices. It is not an acknowledgement of war, or glorification of war, it's like ancestry recognition, right.

Further, he elaborated:

Specifically, is the idea, with the holiday season, how or where....where is the limit, where is that line that says yes, we have to celebrate Christmas, we have to celebrate Hanukkah, we have to celebrate Kwanzaa, we have to celebrate whatever holidays occur at this time, but can we give them the full justice? Can we not give them the full justice? So then there are discussions about, talking to your class, about them...their experiences with the holiday and things and bring it to them and what they are interested in studying and things like that, rather than this is what we are going to study.

Kayla described her experiences in her teaching placement, as well as the rewards and challenges of working in diverse classrooms:

Ok, so I think that some rewards is that you can see that, well like in the school that I was just at, it was very

rewarding to see that everyone worked together and that everyone was very accepting and it was just kind of like, it was just kind of a 'wow' moment; like 'wow, this can work and this can happen'...it can happen here and if it can happen here, then it is kind of like it can happen anywhere, why can't it happen in the world if it can happen in this school and they are making it work so you just need people that are dedicated and caring people that will make it work and are knowledgeable as well. Some obstacles that you might face are maybe parents not fully understanding what are you trying to do or having a different viewpoint on something or challenging some of the things that you are trying to teach because they don't believe in it or they don't fully understand why you are teaching something. So, yeah, that can be challenging facing things like that, like if they want to pull their student out of something because they don't think, they don't believe in it. For example, the school I was just working at, it was Halloween but they made a big deal not to say we are celebrating Halloween so you can wear orange or black so it was either wear orange or black day or if you would like, you could dress up and some students said, some students didn't come to school and when the teachers were like why isn't so and so at school today, and they are like well so and so doesn't believe in Halloween but it wasn't, so they missed school that day and it was a regular school day but they just, I think either they or their parents thought that they were celebrating Halloween but it wasn't really celebrated, it was more just you can dress up if you would like or you can wear orange and black or you don't even have to participate if you don't want to but...

In this example, Kayla explains that there was an attempt to accommodate all students and participating in activities was optional. However, this can be challenging because as she described, there was confusion about what was happening and students may feel left out if they do not participate in the Halloween themed activities. Brian reflected on his past experiences as a student when discussing inclusivity:

I came here in grade 1, it was all Caucasians until grade 4 and then we had our first African Canadian student, he was

the only one there and so we had no opportunities or we all immediately knew who he was because he was different and I wonder what it was like for him as a student, how he felt, of course I didn't think that at the time, I was thinking power rangers and so on. Now looking back, it was a pretty difficult undertaking, definitely you being a little bit different than say the majority. I personally, when I was in many different countries where I was a visible minority, being pointed at, looked at, stared at, getting your arm hair pulled and getting your skin touched and your hair fluffed around, saying oh you feel different, it's...you're obviously like ok, I mean yes I know you feel that I am different so I understand something that it is something you have to realize but we all have skin, we all sleep, we all eat, we all do the same things, we just say we look a bit different, that's who we are, we have just got to be accepting.

Brian's experiences appear to be unique in the sense that he was a minority in another country and can relate to the feelings and challenges associated with being different.

Brian's experiences living in another country where he was the minority greatly contributed to this ability to understand how others might feel in a similar situation. He also elaborated on the way that his experiences helped him become more aware of cultural differences:

I found, just touching back on my own experience, I went from a very monocultural primary education where everyone was Caucasian, to the high school that I went to that was very diverse, with all sorts of different cultures and I had never really thought about it, I wasn't really aware, I was like yeah ok that are other cultures but you know, we are all speaking English here so whatever, sure. So, I didn't really think about it until University where I forced myself to start thinking about it. I enrolled in different language programs and that made me realize yeah, there are a lot of different things in the world, we speak different languages. In French I found was, I know it is not similar to English but I thought of it as being hand in hand with English as far as similar Western languages versus something like Mandarin Chinese which is completely different looking

and completely different sounding so I wasn't aware of that until University where I forced myself to become aware and realize I am struggling with this language, struggling to communicate with people in this language, this is what a lot of people must be feeling in Canada. They are trying to speak English but a lot of people haven't taken the time to think about that and so that can be something very negative for a person that hasn't mastered the language of the majority and could make things very difficult, which is sad because we are impatient people. That is the way society has raised us though, but we are impatient and we have to realize, take a step back, get off the hockey rink if our skates are dull and say like, so yeah, I would probably be in the same boat if I was doing the same thing. But because of our societal make up, we are forced to overtly experience these things in order to understand them and that is something very difficult to teach in school. It is great to say things and it is great to try and relate it to everyday language but it is again, you can't really be told what it is, you have to experience it, which is just very difficult to do and so I find it is going to be one of the biggest difficulties that I will have as a teacher so I have got to gain more perspective myself and the only way you are going to be able to do that is to live for a long time outside of your home and bring back your experiences and understandings and try and make sense of it in some fashion which the masses can consume.

He made a very interesting point when stating that it is important to have experiences in a variety of environments in order to understand others more fully. While this would be helpful, the challenge he outlined is how to learn from his experiences and come up with some way to teach students about the things he went through. While all of the participants' stated that they would like to be more inclusive in their teaching, there still seems to be disconnect between connecting their thoughts and practices.

***Changes in perspective as a result of the equity course and in the context of the teacher education program***

After reflecting on their experiences within the equity issues in the education course, the participants all agreed that this course helped broaden their initial knowledge and understanding about equity issues in education. When discussing his experiences in this course, Nicholas stated:

I think this course is showing me how you have to be very careful about what you say, what you do and how you approach issues of diversity. I think that I knew that going in but maybe this class, what this class is doing is that it is solidifying and making the other students and making myself think more critically about issues of practicality, like classroom decorations at holiday time, the relationship between or the gender issues within classrooms - how as a teacher do you treat the girls differently from the boys or the boys differently from the girls. Issues of...what does it mean to be multicultural, does a multicultural class still exist you know, are we one culture now, how do you...just to critically think about your role as a teacher in sort of such a diverse population and what it means to be conscious of it or to be aware of it but I think that limits...but I guess what I am saying specifically is that it limits, it is not about being conscious or being aware but how do you implement the ideas of diversity, or recognizing diversity and again the word tolerance, and being tolerant and being...I can see now where the wordiness of tolerant is now that we are playing it in this context. And yeah, how do you...how does the implementation of respect, maybe respect is a more accurate term to use within the classroom...

Kayla discussed how her ideas have evolved as a result of participating in the equity issues in education course and how she has become more aware of how these issues will affect her classroom teaching:

maybe like, before I thought that you might have to include, like talk about a few different holidays or things

like that but I think this course has made me aware that there are many, many, many different religions and ethnicities and everything in the school and people that have different beliefs and cultures in the school system so that if I want to include everybody, I will have to spend a lot of time and effort into making sure that I do do that and I don't leave anyone out and that I just, that I do a lot of things for my students to help them all feel involved.

When asked about her thoughts prior to taking this course, she remarked:

I was still thinking that I would like make a good substantial effort to help, to like include everyone in my classroom and things like that. I think this course has kind of engrained in my head that this is a major issue and people have different stances and things like that but as a teacher, you need to have, you need to teach your students to think critically about how they treat others and teach them to accept everyone, and...to be open-minded about everyone around us and just teach everyone to be accepting, I think that is going to be a major goal of mine.

The importance of critical thinking was also mentioned by other students in the equity issues class. They stated that it is key for teachers to not only think critically themselves, but also teach their students to view things from different perspectives and appreciate different views (Classroom Observation, March 10, 2011). Brian also discussed his increased awareness after participating in this course:

You are trying to say what you want to say but as friendly as possible so you have to censor yourself sometimes and be aware but at the same time...being aware of the other person's experience, being aware of how you present your ideas so you have, you have to walk a tight rope and it is difficult for sure, it is a large experience and large, lots of time reflecting on how you should explain things in the class.

Further, he discussed the importance of taking an active interest in students beyond the classroom:



Definitely personally as a teacher, be more aware of your students, be more aware of what their thoughts are, take an active interest in their background...oh, you know, this week is, last week was Eid, could you explain to me what happened on Eid, I would love to hear about it, it would be really great if you could share that with the class...make sure that you try to be as clear and concise as you could be with students when explaining concepts and ideas with them and make sure that you try to do it as friendly as possible. Multicultural education is necessary in the classroom because if we are only going to teach in one concept, then that is not going to translate into the real world so as a teacher, we have to strive to get a better understanding ourselves first of different cultures and then once you have that understanding, try and share some of your ideas and understandings with students and that would help you become also a better teacher at the same time because you would learn many different ways of explaining something and many different forms of explanation. It is important that you also think about critically what your students are interested in in their life and interested in what is going on as well so someone who is working all the time to support their family, someone who is not working all the time and has lots of money, you have to be aware of that as well, you have to think about their experiences and share them and definitely walk in someone else's shoes and see what it is like, see if the grass is greener, see if it is warm or cold, that sort of thing.

This response indicates the importance of remaining relevant and trying to relate to students; it is clear that teachers need to have knowledge about context and students.

Overall, the participants in this study all stated that the equity issues course, in the context of their teacher education program, expanded on their previous knowledge and taught them about various issues that will likely affect them when they begin teaching.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the participants' experiences in their equity issues course

and pre-service teacher education program in general. The interviews that were conducted with the participants showed that they have an increased awareness about issues related to teaching racially and culturally diverse students. While all of the participants expressed that they believe in the idea of equity, the struggle that remained was how to address issues of diversity in daily practice. The main themes discussed were 1) the characteristics and needs of students in diverse environments, 2) the understanding and practice of equity, 3) the idea and practice of inclusivity and 4) changes in perspective as a result of the equity course and in the context of the teacher education program.

When discussing the characteristics and needs of students in urban environments, the pre-service teachers that were interviewed highlighted the fact that there would be a wide range of diversity in the classroom and students may be from a lower socio-economic background. These diverse classrooms were also regarded as a learning opportunity for teachers and the participants emphasized the need for teachers to take time out to learn about their students and the local community. Discussing issues at the classroom level, the pre-service teachers acknowledged that due to the vast range of experiences that students represent, they would bring unique knowledge and expectations into the classroom. Therefore, it is essential to develop culturally relevant material and pedagogy for students. This supports Wilson and Corbett's (2001) study of how urban students define good teachers. Including "real-life stuff" (p. 86) and relating school topics to the students' experiences was identified as one of six traits that urban students valued in a teacher (Leland & Harste, 2005). Within this theme, there were many other skills that

were listed as important for teachers working in culturally and racially diverse classrooms. The importance of being open minded and taking time to learn about students was emphasized in order to connect with students and understand them more completely. As well, the interviewees indicated that it is valuable to establish a community in the classroom and discuss progress with students so that they have the opportunity to be involved in what goes on in their classroom. Lastly, being flexible and developing the ability to identify your own strengths and weaknesses as a teacher was seen as an important skill for teachers in order to promote their professional growth and help them successfully teach all students.

The pre-service teachers interviewed also discussed their understanding and practice of equity in depth. Due to limited previous exposure to different cultures, the participants in this study enrolled in the equity issues course in order to learn about different equity issues. They recognized the fact that classrooms are becoming more diverse and these issues will affect them in their teaching practice. Expanding on this and looking at multicultural education and anti-racist education, the participants acknowledged that this was the first time they had been exposed to the term anti-racist education; due to this, there was confusion between the two frameworks and how they could be applied in the classroom. In discussing multicultural education, tokenism was touched on, directly and indirectly, by all of the participants. The potential harm that could be caused through token inclusion was recognized; however, two of the participants talked about using token symbols as a starting point for more discussion about context. Essentially, this is moving beyond tokenism and recognizing that culture is a very

complex and dynamic concept. While participants stated that teachers cannot be colorblind, multicultural education was the preferred framework because anti-racist education was viewed as more complex since it deals with race and encompasses difficult knowledge. Two of the participants did not see practices of inequity or discrimination in their teaching placements. As new teachers, their focus was often on teaching content and trying to get through the assigned material. A clear downfall of this is that students may not be completely engaged in content since there was not a substantial effort to address issues of diversity in daily practice. However, one of the participants differed and commented that the course was helpful for him to understand his cultural and social identity; as a result, this can help him relate to his students and develop relevant pedagogy.

The idea and practice of inclusivity was a challenging area for participants in this study. All of the participants recognized that since students are coming from various backgrounds, their parents may have different beliefs about what should be taught and it is difficult to deal with competing views and expectations. While the pre-service teachers all supported ideas of inclusive teaching, the biggest challenge they communicated was moving beyond theory to practice and learning how and when to accommodate.

The last theme explored was the changes in perspective as a result of the equity course and in the context of the teacher education program. All of the teachers interviewed believed that this course broadened and expanded on their initial knowledge about teaching in culturally and racially diverse classrooms. This course served as a stepping stone for them to learn about equity issues and think more critically about how

these issues are going to affect their classroom and practices. Overall, Nicholas, Kayla and Brian recognized that it is essential for teachers to take an active interest in their students and dedicate time and effort to develop inclusive classrooms.

This chapter focused on the main themes that were identified through the analysis of interviews that were conducted with three students that were enrolled in an equity issues in education class - Nicholas, Kayla and Brian. Each theme was discussed in depth in relation to relevant literature and the main conclusions from each theme were outlined.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions

This chapter focuses on highlighting the key points of this research study and presenting the main conclusions of the research that was conducted. As well, the limitations and implications of the research will be discussed along with recommendations for further study.

### Overview

This thesis examined the experiences of three pre-service teachers that had an interest in equity education; they were all enrolled in an elective equity issues in education course at a post-secondary institution in Ontario. An anti-racist framework was used as the conceptual framework for this study because it looks at the complex intersections and relationships between various categories of difference.

The purpose of the study was to focus on pre-service teachers that were interested in equity issues and their knowledge and experiences working with a culturally and racially diverse student population. This research did not look to evaluate the equity issues course itself but rather examined whether pre-service teachers felt that they were equipped with the skills to teach in culturally and racially diverse classrooms.

Through interviews with three pre-service teachers – Nicholas, Kayla and Brian – I gained in-depth information about the main questions guiding my research. A main guiding question of this research was to look at the extent to which a pre-service education program prepared teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach effectively in

culturally and racially diverse environments. As well, pre-service teachers' experiences were looked at closely to explore whether they thought that their pre-service teacher education program prepared them to teach in diverse classrooms. Additional questions that guided this study were:

- 1) How did the pre-service teacher education program change teachers' perspectives on teaching in diverse classrooms?
- 2) Why did the pre-service teachers choose to take a course on equity issues in education as part of their pre-service teacher education program? What necessary skills and knowledge were they hoping to gain in their program that would help them be successful in culturally and racially diverse classrooms?
- 3) How did the course on equity issues in education, as part of the pre-service teacher education program, help pre-service teachers to think critically about teaching in racially and culturally diverse environments?

This thesis looked at the importance of the inclusion of equity courses as part of a pre-service program in preparing teachers to work in culturally and racially diverse classrooms. A qualitative research method was used due to the nature of the research question. This methodology was appropriate because the aim of the research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, which could not be captured through quantitative methods. The use of semi-structured interviews with open ended questions was useful because while there were guiding questions to ensure consistency in the interviews, the participants had time to reflect on and describe their experiences in detail. The location chosen for this research study was a post-secondary institution in

Ontario because it offered a course on equity issues in education; as well, the pre-service teachers from this institution were surrounded by diverse schools and had a variety of experiences working within these schools.

In the data analysis, the main themes that emerged were: 1) the characteristics and needs of students in diverse environments, 2) the understanding and practice of equity, 3) the idea and practice of inclusivity and 4) changes in perspective as a result of the equity course and in the context of the teacher education program. The results from this study show similarities and differences in the experiences of the participants. All of the pre-service teachers acknowledged that students in diverse urban communities have a unique set of needs that must be addressed. However, through their experiences, the participants found that working in a diverse classroom can be a great learning opportunity for educators. Nicholas, Kayla and Brian recognized the importance of learning about the local community to understand students better; on a similar note, they also stated the importance of connecting teaching material to the experiences of students and developing culturally relevant pedagogy. When enrolling in the equity issues course, as part of their pre-service teacher education program, the participants were generally hoping to get a better understanding of equity issues. Through the interviews, they stated that they had become more aware of various issues that could be relevant to their students in the future and how equity issues will affect them at the classroom level. In addition to acquiring useful knowledge about equity issues, the pre-service teachers noted that they expanded on many of their skills that would be helpful in the future, including remaining open-minded, viewing things from different perspectives and learning to be flexible in their



teaching. As well, they discussed the importance of embracing a variety of instructional methods and developing critical thinking skills in themselves and their students. The participants all stressed the need for continuous reflection and the importance of considering your own background and the backgrounds of students in order to be an effective urban teacher.

When discussing specific frameworks, namely multicultural education and/or anti-racist education, all three of the pre-service teachers were unsure about the key differences between the two frameworks. While the participants were beginning to develop a basic understanding of these two frameworks, they had difficulty explaining how the two approaches would be different when applied to their classroom teaching. This implies that they did not have a clear understanding of the two frameworks at the time that the interviews were conducted. Generally, anti-racist education was viewed as more complex and as a result, multicultural education was preferred. This may be due to the fact that anti-racist education deals with difficult knowledge, while multicultural education focuses on various characteristics of different cultures. However, in our discussions, the participants made it clear that they all supported ideas of equity and fairness in theory. A key idea that all of the participants discussed was tokenism; this was important because they all recognized that relying on simplified ideas of cultures can perpetuate stereotypes and do more harm than good in the long run. This shows that while they had an understanding of the main idea of anti-racist education, a challenge they all expressed was how to find time to teach about the vast number of cultures that are often represented in schools. Overall, while Nicholas, Kayla and Brian recognize that

classrooms everywhere are becoming more diverse, the challenge that remains is how to bridge theory and practice.

The findings of this study are important because teachers who are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to work in culturally and racially diverse classrooms can work towards the goal of success for all students. As well, this research adds to the current literature about the importance of preparing pre-service teachers to work in increasingly diverse settings. The area of equity and inclusive education in Ontario has received an increased amount of attention and the commitment to achieving inclusive classrooms is reflected in the Ministry of Education's Equity and Inclusive Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2009). In particular, this document highlights the importance of treating diversity as an asset and ensuring that teaching practices and material reflect the needs, background and experiences of students (Ministry of Education, 2009). The participants in this study also recognized the need for classroom material to be relevant to the lives and backgrounds of students. The information gained in this study is important because it reflects the voice of pre-service teachers, which is critical because they are the ones that are delivering content and engaging with students in the classroom.

### ***Limitations***

As with any research, there are limitations in this study. Due to the fact that the case study approach was used and the sample size was small, the results from this research cannot be generalized. Also, there may be other factors that are influencing pre-service teachers' thoughts and perspectives, aside from the equity issues in education

course. While there is more research needed in the area of teacher preparation and the impact of courses, this research study provides insight and can add to research in this area, particularly because it focused solely on the experiences of teacher candidates.

### ***Implications***

The main implication of this research study is that it has contributed to current literature, which shows the importance of continued research into pre-service programs. In this study, the pre-service teachers that were interviewed all agreed that the equity issues course contributed to their knowledge and development as educators. Pre-service teacher education programs are often the first step in preparing teachers for a variety of issues that they will likely face in their own classrooms. As Milner (2006) concluded, courses need to be developed to help teachers gain the skills necessary to be effective urban teachers. Due to changing demographics and the fact that classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, it has become even more important to prepare teachers for diverse urban classrooms. As Baldwin, Buchanan and Rudisill (2007) stated, the "shifting demographics in schools toward greater ethnic and linguistic diversity require teacher education programs to teach future teachers how to be effective with all learners" (p.315). This sentiment appears repeatedly in education research, which shows that effective pre-service programs are becoming even more important as we move into the future.

### ***Areas for future research***

The existing literature and research reviewed highlighted the importance of pre-service teacher education programs and the role that they play in preparing teachers to work in diverse classrooms. Due to the fact that classrooms are becoming increasingly

diverse, this area of research continues to be key. For future studies, ethnographic research including observations of pre-service teachers in classroom placements would be helpful to solidify the responses being given by participants and ensure that they are accurate. As well, follow-up interviews with participants after a course is finished would be helpful in determining if there are long-lasting effects on attitudes and teaching practice. Lastly, a long-term study looking at how many of these teachers work in urban schools would contribute to current research about successful urban teachers.

There is also a need for further research to address the theory to practice gap that was identified by the participants in this research study. An important area for future research is how can pre-service teachers be prepared or supported to translate theory into classroom practice, particularly regarding issues of equity and social justice.

### *A final note*

This thesis looked at the experiences of pre-service teachers as they worked through their equity issues in education course, as part of their pre-service teacher education program. All of the participants showed an increased awareness of equity issues and a commitment to the theories of inclusive teaching. However, there remains a need to build on ideas of equity and fairness, as there is disconnect between theory and practice. The struggle that remains is developing relevant pedagogy and ensuring that students' varied experiences are represented and respected in the classroom.

## Works Cited

- Baldwin, S., Buchanan, A. & Rudisill, M. (2007). What Teacher Candidates Learned About Diversity, Social Justice, and Themselves from Service-Learning Experiences. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58(4), 315-327.
- Dee, J. & Henkin, A. (2002). Assessing Dispositions Toward Cultural Diversity Among Pre-Service Teachers. *Urban Education*, 37 (1), 22-40.
- Dei, G. (2003). Schooling and the dilemma of youth disengagement. *McGill Journal of Education*, 38 (2), 241-256.
- Dei, G. (2005). Resisting the Gated Community: Responding to Diversity and Difference En Route to Excellence in Our Schools. *Orbit*, 35 (3), 34-36.
- Dei, G. (2008). Communicating Across the Tracks: Challenges for Anti-racist Educators in Ontario Today. *Orbit*, 37 (2&3), 106-109.
- Desrochers, C. (2006). Educating Preservice Teachers for Diversity: Perspectives on the Possibilities and Limitations of Service Learning. *The Journal of Educational Thought*, 40 (3), 263-280.
- Frankenberg, E., Taylor, A. & Merseth, K. (2010). Walking the Walk: Teacher Candidates' Professed Commitment to Urban Teaching and Their Subsequent Career Decisions. *Urban Education*, 45(3), 312-346
- Fry, P. & McKinney, L. (1997). A Qualitative Study of Preservice Teachers' Early Field Experiences in an Urban, Culturally Different School. *Urban Education*, 32 (2), 184-201.
- Galman, S., Pica-Smith, C. & Rosenberger, C. (2010). Aggressive and Tender Navigations: Teacher Educators Confront Whiteness in Their Practice. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(3), 225-236.
- Gay, L.R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (9<sup>th</sup> Edition). Pearson Education.
- Gehrke, R. (2005). Poor Schools, Poor Students, Successful Teachers. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 42(1), 14-17.

- Goodwin, A. (1997). Multicultural Stories: Preservice Teachers' Conceptions of and Responses to Issues of Diversity. *Urban Education*, 32 (1), 117-145.
- Groulx, J. (2001). Changing Preservice Teacher Perceptions of Minority Schools. *Urban Education*, 36 (1), 60-92.
- Hagiwara, S. & Wray, S. (2009). Transformation in Reverse: Naive Assumptions of an Urban Educator. *Education and Urban Society*, 41(3), 338-363.
- Hampton, B., Peng, L. & Ann, J. (2008). Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Urban Schools. *The Urban Review*, 40(3), 268 – 295.
- Hoepfl, M. (1997). Choosing Qualitative Research: A Primer for Technology Education Researchers. *Journal of Technology Education*, 9 (1), 47-63.
- James-Wilson, S. (1999). Stories about the inner-city: beginning teachers struggle with image and reality. *Orbit*, 30(3), 34 – 43.
- James-Wilson, S. (2007). Representation to Conceptualize a Social Justice Approach to Urban Teacher Preparation. In P. Solomon and D. Sekayi (Eds.), *Urban Teacher Education and Teaching: Innovative Practices for Diversity and Social Justice* (17-30). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Johnston, I., Carson, T., Richardson, G., Donald, D., Plews, J. & Kim, M. (2009). Awareness, Discovery, Becoming, and Debriefing: Promoting Cross-Cultural Pedagogical Understanding in an Undergraduate Education Program. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 55 (1), 1-17.
- Leland, C. & Harste, J. (2005). Doing What We Want to Become: Preparing New Urban Teachers. *Urban Education*, 40 (1), 60-77.
- Lichtman, Marilyn. (2006). *Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Liggett, T. & Finley, S. (2009). "Upsetting the Apple Cart": Issues of Diversity in Preservice Teacher Education. *Multicultural Education*, 33-38.
- Milner, R. (2006). Preservice Teachers' Learning about Cultural and Racial Diversity: Implications for Urban Education. *Urban Education*, 41 (4), 343-375.
- Mujawamariya, D. & Mahrouse, G. (2004). Multicultural Education in Canadian Preservice Programs: Teacher Candidates' Perspectives. *Alberta Journal of*

*Educational Research*, 50 (4), 336-353.

Ontario. Ministry of Education. Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation. 2009.

Patton, Michael. (2002). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Rezai-Rashti, G. (1995). Multicultural education, anti-racist education and critical pedagogy: Reflections on everyday practice. In R. Ng, P. Staton and J. Scane (Eds.), *Anti-racism, feminism and critical approaches to education* (3-19). Westport: Greenwood Publishers Inc.

Rose, Leslie (2007). Learning to walk the talk: steps towards social justice teacher education in the inner city. *Orbit*, 36(3), 8-11.

Schultz, K., Jones-Walker, C. & Chikkatur, A. (2008). Listening to Students, Negotiating Beliefs: Preparing Teachers for Urban Classrooms. *The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Curriculum Inquiry*, 38 (2), 1-34.

Sleeter, C. (2001). Preparing Teachers for Culturally Diverse Schools: Research and the Overwhelming Presence of Whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52 (2), 94-106.

Smith, D. & Smith B. (2008). Urban Educator's Voices: Understanding Culture in the Classroom. *Urban Rev*, 41, 334-351.

Solomon, P. (1997). Race, Role Modelling and Representation in Teacher Education and Teaching. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 22 (4), 395-406.

Solomon, P. & Levine-Rasky, C. (2003). *Teaching for Equity and Diversity: Research to Practice*. Michigan: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Solomon, P. & Rezai-Rashti, G. (2000). *Teacher Candidates' Racial Identity Development and its Impact on Learning to Teach*. Funded by The Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

Solomon, P., Manoukian, R. & Clarke, J. (2007). Pre-Service Teachers as Border Crossers: Linking Urban Schools and Communities Through Service Learning. In P. Solomon and D. Sekayi (Eds.), *Urban Teacher Education and Teaching*:

*Innovative Practices for Diversity and Social Justice* (67-87). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Solomon, P. & Sekayi, D. (Eds.). (2007). *Urban Teacher Education and Teaching: Innovative Practices for Diversity and Social Justice*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Stairs, A. (2010). Becoming a Professional Educator in an Urban School-University Partnership: A Case Study Analysis of Preservice Teacher Learning. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 45-62.

Titone, C. (2005). The Philosophy of Inclusion: Roadblocks and Remedies for the Teacher and Teacher Educator. *The Journal of Educational Thought*, 39 (1), 7-32.

Villegas, A. & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers: Rethinking the Curriculum. *The Journal of Teacher Education*, 53 (1), 20-32.

Weiner, L. (1999). *Urban Teaching: The Essentials*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Woods, T., Kurtz-Costes, B., & Rowley, S. (2005). The Development of Stereotypes About the Rich and Poor: Age, Race, and Family Income Differences in Beliefs. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 34 (5), 437-445.

Young, P. (2007). Thinking Outside the Box: Fostering Racial and Ethnic Discourses in Urban Teacher Education. In P. Solomon and D. Sekayi (Eds.), *Urban Teacher Education and Teaching: Innovative Practices for Diversity and Social Justice* (109-128). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.



## Appendix A – Letter of information

### *Exploring Pre-service Teachers' Experience of an Urban Education Course in a Pre-service Program in Ontario*

#### LETTER OF INFORMATION

My name is Taranjit Saini and I am Masters of Education student at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into teaching in urban schools and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The aims of this study are to gain information and additional insight into the experiences of pre-service teachers enrolled in urban education courses.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in interviews and reflect on your experiences in urban schools and as part of the urban education course. The interviews will be approximately 1 hour in length and will be conducted on campus. For this study, the interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy.

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential and stored in a locked cabinet for a period of up to five years. In order to ensure confidentiality, fictitious names will be used throughout the research.

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your academic status. The course instructor will not be informed of which students are participating in the study and no confidential information will be shared with the instructor.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Manager, Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario at 519-661-3036 or [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca).

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

## Appendix B- Consent form

### *Exploring Pre-service Teachers' Experience of an Urban Education Course in a Pre-service Program in Ontario*

*Taranjit Saini*

#### CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:


Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Date:

## **Appendix C – Guiding interview questions**

- 1) How would you describe an urban school? What are the characteristics of urban schools?
- 2) How would you describe the student population in an urban school?
- 3) Do you have experience working in a diverse urban school environment? Tell me about an experience that you had working in an urban school.
- 4) What skills and knowledge do teachers need to be successful in diverse urban schools?
- 5) What are some rewards and challenges that you may face when working in a diverse urban school? Please give me some examples.
- 6) Could you explain why you chose to take a course on equity education? What were you hoping to learn from this course?
- 7) Provide an example of how your perspective on teaching in diverse schools has changed as a result of this program.
- 8) Based on the coursework you have completed to this point, what are some similarities and differences between multicultural education and anti-racist education?
- 9) Provide an example of how you would integrate an anti-racist approach into your teaching.  
How is this different from the multicultural education framework?
- 10) Is there anything you would like to add that was not touched on during the interview?

## Appendix D – Thesis Proposal approval

	<b>Faculty of Education</b> <b>Graduate Programs &amp; Research Office</b>	<b>FORM A</b> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Print Form</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Reset Form</div>												
<b>APPROVAL OF M.Ed. THESIS PROPOSAL</b>														
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>If the proposed research does not involve human subjects or the direct use of their written records, video-tapes, recordings, tests, etc., this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal should be delivered directly to the Graduate Programs &amp; Research Office for final approval.</b></p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>If the proposed research involves human subjects, this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal and Ethical Review Form signature pages (Section 1.1 to 1.7) must be submitted to the Graduate Programs &amp; Research Office for final approval.</b></p> </td> </tr> </table>			<p><b>If the proposed research does not involve human subjects or the direct use of their written records, video-tapes, recordings, tests, etc., this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal should be delivered directly to the Graduate Programs &amp; Research Office for final approval.</b></p>	<p><b>If the proposed research involves human subjects, this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal and Ethical Review Form signature pages (Section 1.1 to 1.7) must be submitted to the Graduate Programs &amp; Research Office for final approval.</b></p>										
<p><b>If the proposed research does not involve human subjects or the direct use of their written records, video-tapes, recordings, tests, etc., this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal should be delivered directly to the Graduate Programs &amp; Research Office for final approval.</b></p>	<p><b>If the proposed research involves human subjects, this signature form, along with ONE copy of the research proposal and Ethical Review Form signature pages (Section 1.1 to 1.7) must be submitted to the Graduate Programs &amp; Research Office for final approval.</b></p>													
<b>IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE A COPY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL (INCLUDING REVISIONS) TO THE THESIS SUPERVISOR AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.</b>														
<table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Student's Name: <u>Tarajit Saini</u></td> <td style="width: 40%;">Student #: <u>250541575</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Field of Study: <u>Masters of Education - Policy</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Title of Thesis: <u>Exploring Pre-service Teachers Experience of an Urban Education course in a Pre-service Program in Ontario</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Name of Thesis Supervisor: <u>Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Name of Thesis Advisory Committee Member: <u>Dr. Wayne Martins</u></td> </tr> </table>			Student's Name: <u>Tarajit Saini</u>	Student #: <u>250541575</u>	Field of Study: <u>Masters of Education - Policy</u>		Title of Thesis: <u>Exploring Pre-service Teachers Experience of an Urban Education course in a Pre-service Program in Ontario</u>		Name of Thesis Supervisor: <u>Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti</u>		Name of Thesis Advisory Committee Member: <u>Dr. Wayne Martins</u>			
Student's Name: <u>Tarajit Saini</u>	Student #: <u>250541575</u>													
Field of Study: <u>Masters of Education - Policy</u>														
Title of Thesis: <u>Exploring Pre-service Teachers Experience of an Urban Education course in a Pre-service Program in Ontario</u>														
Name of Thesis Supervisor: <u>Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti</u>														
Name of Thesis Advisory Committee Member: <u>Dr. Wayne Martins</u>														
<b>DOES THIS RESEARCH INVOLVE THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No														
<b>APPROVAL SIGNATURES:</b> <table style="width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Graduate Student: _____</td> <td style="width: 40%;">Date: <u>Sept. 5, 2010.</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thesis Supervisor: _____</td> <td>Date: <u>Sept 8, 2010</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advisory Committee: _____</td> <td>Date: _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ethical Review Clearance: _____</td> <td>Date: <u>Oct 7/10</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ethical Review Number: <u>1009-5</u></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Associate Dean Graduate Programs &amp; Research: _____</td> <td>Date: <u>7/10/2010</u></td> </tr> </table>			Graduate Student: _____	Date: <u>Sept. 5, 2010.</u>	Thesis Supervisor: _____	Date: <u>Sept 8, 2010</u>	Advisory Committee: _____	Date: _____	Ethical Review Clearance: _____	Date: <u>Oct 7/10</u>	Ethical Review Number: <u>1009-5</u>		Associate Dean Graduate Programs & Research: _____	Date: <u>7/10/2010</u>
Graduate Student: _____	Date: <u>Sept. 5, 2010.</u>													
Thesis Supervisor: _____	Date: <u>Sept 8, 2010</u>													
Advisory Committee: _____	Date: _____													
Ethical Review Clearance: _____	Date: <u>Oct 7/10</u>													
Ethical Review Number: <u>1009-5</u>														
Associate Dean Graduate Programs & Research: _____	Date: <u>7/10/2010</u>													
<b>A STUDENT MAY PROCEED WITH RESEARCH WHEN A COPY OF THIS FORM CONTAINING ALL APPROVAL SIGNATURES HAS BEEN RECEIVED.</b> <i>A copy of this proposal may be made public and kept on a two-hour reserve in the Faculty of Education Library.</i>														
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"> <span>The University of Western Ontario</span> <span>Faculty of Education</span> <span>Version Date: January 2010</span> </div> <div style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Graduate Programs &amp; Research Office</div>														